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SOME OLD LOVE STORIES

T. P. O'CONNOR

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OLD LOVE STORIES

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BY

T. P. O'CONNOR

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SOME OLD LOVE STORIES

ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND HIS WIFE[1]

I

ON a certain day a few months ago I found room in a mind occupied with many other subjects for a distinct pang of regret, and the next morning I woke with that vague sense of something having gone wrong with which so many of us of uncertain spirits are familiar. About three years ago I paid a visit to Carlsbad, and, after some days of dreadful loneliness and appalling depression, I fell in with a covey of Americans. Whenever I meet Americans I am always at home. It takes me exactly three minutes—I have sometimes done it in even shorter time—to get into such thorough sympathy with any American man or woman—except the odious tribe of Anglo-maniacs—as to be able to talk to them, and to hear from them about all those subjects

[1] *Lincoln: The True Story of a Great Life*, by William H. Herndon. London: Sampson Low & Co.

which we keep to ourselves in casual intercourse with people of other nationalities—our emotions, upbringing, life, and faith, and death. In the American colony at Carlsbad there was one figure which stood out in very bold relief. Every morning there was rolled up to one of the springs, in a bath-chair, a singularly tall, enormously broad-shouldered, large-faced, large-featured man, whose feet, swollen by gout, were unable to bear his heavy frame. A striking figure, indeed, he was in any crowd. When he did stand up, he towered above everybody else, and, as is not always the case, his frame was broad in proportion. Altogether, he was one of the most remarkable specimens of a splendid Western man I have ever seen. Gout seemed to be his one ailment. Though he had had a life of fierce and vivid and, I have no doubt, roystering adventure, he was still in the very bloom of strength; he was not a ruin, but if he were, he was one of the most majestic ruins I have ever seen. And what a fascination he had! There is something trying to the nerves in Americanese to those who have not learned the language; but when you have acquired it, there is a singular attraction in its slow drawl, its curious serenity, and what I may call passionate composure; in its delightful individuality, its eccentricity of view—its perfect simplicity and startling and fascinating frankness. I can say that I spent literally hours in spellbound and silent listening to this wonderful man. The

one subject on which my friend was exhaustless, on which he was never tired of talking, and I never tired of listening, was Abraham Lincoln. For my friend was Ward Lamon. Ward Lamon had been for years the friend, the law-partner, the confidential adviser, sometimes the daring guardian of Abraham Lincoln's personal protection against the lurking assassin and the ubiquitous rowdy. I have always looked forward to many another encounter with my dear old friend; and assuredly that splendid frame, that massive head, that robust appetite, suggested long years of life and strength. And now I take up accidentally an obscure American journal and find that he has passed beyond these voices, and now is nothing but a mournful memory.

II

FOR the next hour or two I shall walk by his side in spirit, for I shall try with the aid of another pen than his, but under the illumination I received from his conversation, to draw a portrait of his hero and his friend. Many people indeed will probably be startled to know that Abraham Lincoln had a love story at all. There are few modern contemporary characters of whose inner life so little is known among Englishmen. And yet there are few lives that have in them more of picturesqueness, pathos, suffering,—that bring more

home to one's mind the tears that are in most human lots, that illustrate better the contrast between the outer and the inner life of a great public man. I put Lincoln's history among my list of love stories for this reason, that there were few men whose lives were more profoundly influenced by women; that it is to the breakdown of a great love the world probably owes his political greatness, and he himself a life of inner gloom, which almost recalls the brooding melancholy that still speaks to us in the harsh and upbraiding accents of Swift's epitaph and tomb.

III

THERE is another and a more widespread moral from the life of Lincoln—the enormous, the inextinguishable influence of early years, and especially if those years have been marked by poverty and suffering. Further, his story is—as he himself discovered—a very curious study in heredity, in the transmission of tendencies, qualities, and alas! also in the reminiscences of the bitter and sorrowful experiences of others—of others who were dust before the children of the children of their loins had put on mortal flesh. And of all things in heredity this perpetuation of ancient sorrows is one of the most curious and saddening manifestations.

The origin of Abraham Lincoln was not merely poor and squalid, it had in it something of, I will not say disgrace, but of disrepute. In the Southern States of America there used to be before the war a curious nondescript and very despised class that broke the vast interspace between the aristocratic planter on the one side and the negro slave on the other. In the depths of poverty,—ignorant,—superstitious,—nomadic,—despised by the wealthy whites as a disgrace to their complexion,—looked down on even by the negroes—who are great admirers of fine blood—as degenerate specimens of the dominant race,—the "Poor Whites," as they were called, were almost a helot and an outcast class. To the race of "Poor Whites" the parents of Abraham Lincoln emphatically belonged. He himself felt this so sorely that rarely throughout his whole life could he be got to make any allusions to his early days, and whenever he did so, it was always with a sense of recurring pain and embittered humiliation. Indeed, the awkwardness of his manners, his shyness, his gloom—all these things are attributed by his biographer partly to the recollection and the abiding sense of humiliation at these early surroundings. This curious trait is very remarkable in America. There, vast changes of fortune are common, and often occur within the narrow compass of one life; and there also humbleness of origin, except in some of the Southern States and the Eastern cities, is too common among those who

have risen to the highest places and vastest fortunes to excite any comment. It is also one of the many beneficent results of republican training and a universal system of education, that the American, who has risen from even the humblest beginnings, has a refinement of manner, an easy and unaffected self-confidence and self-respect, that enable him to fit into any new position. He is entirely free from the crawling servility or the bouncing self-assertion which are the characteristic vices of the *nouveaux riches* of older countries. It is, therefore, evident that Lincoln was conscious not merely of poverty, but also of a certain shamefulness in his birth. It was also his unhappy lot to be in the very forefront of the fight between the civilization of the old South and the Northern States. He was, as we shall see, almost entirely Southern in his origin, like a good many others of the foremost and most potent champions of the North; and in the heat of that awful struggle, he doubtless was often reminded by the pen of Southern journalists of the circumstances of his origin in the ferocious language of the times.

IV

THERE was a further reason for reticence and shamefacedness. In at least one instance, there was the stain of illegitimacy in the family. Here

is a passage from the book before me, which brings out this fact, and which will serve as a very vivid picture of what Abraham Lincoln was like in his many varying and quickly succeeding moods—

On the subject of his ancestry and origin, I only remember one time when Mr. Lincoln ever referred to it. It was about 1850, when he and I were driving in his one-horse buggy to the court in Menard County, Illinois. The suit we were going to try was one in which we were likely, either directly or collaterally, to touch upon the subject of hereditary traits. During the ride he spoke for the first time in my hearing of his mother, and dwelling on her characteristics, and mentioning or enumerating what qualities he inherited from her, he said, among other things, that she was the illegitimate daughter of Lucy Hanks and of a well-bred Virginian farmer or planter, and he argued that from this last source came his power of analysis, his logic, his mental activity, his ambition, and all the qualities that distinguished him from the other members and descendants of the Hanks family. His theory in discussing the matter of hereditary traits had been that, for certain reasons, illegitimate children are oftentimes sturdier and brighter than those born in legitimate wedlock, and in his case he believed that his better nature and finer qualities came from this broad-minded, unknown Virginian. The revelation, painful as it was, called up the recollection of his mother, and as the buggy jolted over the road, he added ruefully—"God bless my mother! all that I am or ever hope to be I owe to her," and he immediately lapsed into silence. Our interchange of ideas ceased as we rode on for some time without exchanging a word He was sad and absorbed. Burying himself in thought, and musing no doubt over the disclosure he had just made, he drew around him a barrier which I feared to penetrate. His words and melancholy tone made a deep impression on me. It was an experience I can never forget. As we neared the town of Petersburg we were overtaken by an old man who rode beside us for a while, and entertained us with reminiscences of days on the frontier.

Lincoln was reminded of several Indian stories, and by the time we had reached the unpretentious court-house the sadness had passed away.

V

IT is curiously characteristic of the squalor of poor Lincoln's early days, that even the circumstances of his birth are subject to dispute. It was always contended that there was no resemblance whatever between him and his putative father, either mentally or physically. Hence there grew up a legend that even he was not legitimate, but that he was the son of a miller, that Thomas Lincoln adopted him and passed as his father, and that his gifts and ambition were to be traced thus to a different source from that of his putative father.

This theory, I believe, is found to be far-fetched. There is much more resemblance between Lincoln and his parents than perhaps might at first sight appear. Certainly Thomas Lincoln was one of the most hopeless of parents. Thoroughly idle, incompetent, his whole life was a nomadic flight from one bankrupt career to another. He was a rough carpenter and also a farmer, a mixture of trades which has its own lesson as to the primitive conditions under which he lived. He belonged to the Southern State of Kentucky, his ancestors having moved there from Virginia. Everybody

who knows anything of America will know that there could not be two more characteristically Southern States than Virginia and Kentucky, and will understand, therefore, some of the bitterness with which the Southerners regarded the man who crushed their attempt to divide America.

It will be found by and by that there were not wanting in Abraham Lincoln's character some of the traits of shiftlessness, bad economy, and restlessness which characterized his father. It was from his mother, however, as has been seen, that he traced most of his gifts, and undoubtedly there is something in the picture of her—faint as it is—which will account for some of the traits of the great man to whom she gave birth. Nancy Hanks was the name of Lincoln's mother; and much of the scurrility of which he was the object, centres round her name. I have just alluded to the fact that she was supposed to have brought to old Thomas Lincoln's house the son of another man. This story is probably untrue; but it is evident that, like her husband, she belonged to the poorest of the poor. All the accounts of her people also show them to have been thriftless, nomadic waifs who never did very well. And yet there is something in the story of the humble mother which accounts for her bringing so brilliant a son into the world; that also marks her as a pathetic and touching figure in his history and the history of her country.

Here is a description of her which is well worth reproduction—

At the time of her marriage to Thomas Lincoln, Nancy was in her twenty-third year. She was above the ordinary height in stature, weighed about one hundred and thirty pounds, was slenderly built, and had much the appearance of one inclined to consumption. Her skin was dark, her hair dark-brown, eyes grey and small, forehead prominent, face sharp and angular, with a marked expression of melancholy which fixed itself in the memory of every one who ever saw or knew her. Though her life was seemingly beclouded by a spirit of sadness, she was in disposition amiable and generally cheerful. Mr. Lincoln himself said to me in 1851, on receiving the news of his father's death, that, whatever might be said of his parents, and however uncompromising the early surroundings of his mother may have been, she was highly intellectual by nature, had a strong memory, acute judgment, was cool and heroic. From a mental standpoint she no doubt rose above her surroundings, and had she lived, the stimulus of her nature would have accelerated her son's success, and she would have been a much more ambitious prompter than his father ever was.

VI

ONE of the things I remember to have heard suggested by my poor friend Ward Lamon, was that a good deal of Lincoln's gift of speech came from the religious instincts of his mother. She belonged to the primitive period of religion, in which bodily contortion and hysterical excitement are assumed to be manifestations of the godly spirit. Here is a description of a scene in which

she played a part at a religious gathering, which will be found, I think, to throw some light on the subsequent development of her son's character. It is a description of a camp-meeting at Elizabeth's Town, Kentucky, in 1806, by an eye-witness—

The Hanks girls were great at camp-meetings. I remember one in 1806. I will give you a scene, and if you will then read the books written on the subject you will find some apology for the superstition which was said to be in Abe Lincoln's character. It was at a camp-meeting, as before said, when a general shout was about to commence. Preparations were being made, and a young lady invited me to stand on the bench at her side where we could see all over the altar. To the right, a strong, athletic young man, about twenty-five years of age, was put in trim for the occasion, which was done by divesting him of all his apparel except his shirt and pants. On the left a young lady was being put in trim in much the same manner, so that her clothes would not be in the way, and so that when her combs flew out her hair would go into graceful braids. She too was young, not more than twenty perhaps. The performance commenced about the same time by the young man on the right and the young lady on the left. Slowly and gracefully they worked their way towards the centre, singing, shouting, kissing, generally their own sex, until at last nearer and nearer they came. When the centre of the altar was reached, the two closed their arms round each other, the man singing and shouting at the top of his voice—

I have my Jesus in my arms,
Sweet as honey, strong as bacon ham.

Just at this moment the young lady holding on my arm whispered, "They are to be married next week; her name is Hanks." There are some who don't believe this is true religion inspired by the Holy Spirit; but any man who cannot believe it had better keep it to himself. The Hankses were the finest singers and shouters in our country.

There is some doubt as to whether the particular young member of the Hanks family here described was the actual mother of the President; but whether she was or not, the picture gives a very graphic and clear idea of the kind of surroundings under which Lincoln's parent was brought up.

VII

THOMAS LINCOLN had bought two farms in Kentucky on easy terms of payment, but when the time came he had no money to meet the obligation, and he emigrated to Indiana in quest of more hospitable surroundings. Mr. Herndon, the biographer of Lincoln with whom I am dealing, with commendable good sense dismisses altogether the absurd legend that Thomas Lincoln left Kentucky because he could not bear the sight of slavery. Good, easy man, he had something else to think of! It throws a curious light on the history of the early life of some of the most populous States of America to-day to read of the kind of preparations which old Thomas Lincoln had to make for beginning his hegira—

He began preparations for removal in the fall of 1816 by building for his use a flat boat. Loading it with his tools and personal effects, including in the invoice, as we are told, four hundred gallons of whisky, he launched his "crazy craft" on a tributary of Salt Creek, known as the Rolling

Fork. Along with the current he floated down to Ohio river, but his rudely-made vessel, either from the want of experience in its navigator, or because of its ill-adaptation to withstand the force and caprices of the currents in the great river, capsized one day, and boat and cargo went to the bottom. The luckless boatman set to work, however, and by dint of great patience and labour succeeded in recovering the tools and the bulk of the whisky. Righting his boat, he continued down the river, landing at a point called Thompson's Ferry, in Perry County, on the Indiana side.

Then our settler travelled back to his Kentucky home, walking every bit of the way, and finally brought his family and his belongings in a wagon drawn by two horses to their new home.

VIII

A DESCRIPTION of the home in which young Lincoln was brought up, will give some idea of the nature of the struggles through which he had to pass—

The cabin was of hewed logs, and was eighteen feet square. It was high enough to admit of a loft, where Abe slept, and to which he ascended each night by means of pegs driven in the wall. The rude furniture was in keeping with the surroundings. Three-legged stools answered for chairs. The bedstead, made of poles fastened in the cracks of the logs on one side, and supported by a crotched stick driven in the ground floor on the other, was covered with skins, leaves, and old clothes. A table of the same finish as the stools, a few pewter dishes, a Dutch oven, and a skillet completed the household outfit.

When Abe was ten years of age he lost his mother. She died of a curious plague that infected these small Western settlements known as the "milk-sick." There was no doctor within thirty-five miles, no church or graveyard. She was buried without ceremony by her husband's hands in the forest. Thus lived and thus died the mother of a President of the United States. It is no wonder that Lowell should speak enthusiastically of him as "the first American" who had occupied the presidential chair. In the hardship and wildness of his surroundings, in the toil of the pioneer that has opened up new country to the world, in the poverty, squalor, and lowly toil of early days, Lincoln certainly had an experience which America alone could supply.

IX

WHEN Thomas Lincoln married, he could not even read or write; Nancy Hanks was a little better educated, and, it is said, succeeded in teaching her husband how to write his name and spell laboriously his way through the Bible. Shortly after the death of Nancy Hanks, Thomas Lincoln married for the second time. Lincoln's step-mother was an extremely amiable and good woman; she survived her illustrious step-son, and to the last the relations between the two were

affectionate. It was to her influence that Lincoln owed his chance of getting even the little education he had. His father saw little advantage in book-learning, and was much more anxious that Abe should learn his own trade of carpenter. But Abe showed no taste for the trade, preferring to go into the woods rail-splitting, and was a curious example, even in his earliest days, of that mixture of idleness and industry which is so common among intellectual youths. He had grown rapidly, and was upwards of six feet high before he was eighteen. The neighbours of a certain type did not augur very hopefully for his future. Here is the testimony of a farmer of the district, John Romine by name—

> He worked for me . . . but was always reading and thinking; I used to get mad at him for it. I say he was awful lazy. He would laugh and talk, crack his jokes, and tell stories all the time; didn't love work half as much as his pay. He said to me one day that his father taught him to work, but he never could teach him to love it.

But there are methods of work unknown to the John Romines of the world—work of reading and thought, and Lincoln seems to have been particularly industrious in this direction. Whenever he was able, he attended school; he read on Sundays and wrote on Sundays, and usually he brought his books with him to the woods. It was no uncommon occurrence for him to drop the axe, and, retiring to the shade of some tree, bury himself in the dreamland of the Bible or Æsop's Fables.

The family were so poor that they could not afford candle-light in the evenings, and young Abe had to study by the open fireplace, "lying on his stomach." With a piece of charcoal he would "cipher on a broad wooden shovel." When the latter was covered over on both sides, he "would take his father's drawing-knife or plane and shave it off, and make it ready for a fresh supply of inscriptions the next day."

"He often moved about the cabin with a piece of chalk, writing and ciphering on boards and the flat sides of hewn logs. When every bare wooden surface had been filled with his letters and ciphers, he would erase them and begin anew."

X

ONE feature, finally, of his character at this period. He had become well known for his strength, and for a while he seems to have been much more proud of his physical than of his mental gifts. He accomplished feats which sometimes defied the strength of three men. Occasionally, in these wild Western times, it was necessary to defend one's prowess, and Lincoln figures in a curious and weird scene, which is in contrast with the chief magistrate whom the world knows. A fight took place between one of Abe's step-brothers and another

youth of the district. When Abe saw that his relative was worsted—

Abe burst through, caught Grigsby, and threw him off some feet away. There he stood, proud as Lucifer, and swinging a bottle of liquor over his head, swore that he was "the big buck of the lick." "If any one doubts it," he shouted, "he has only to come on and wet his horns." A general engagement followed this challenge.

XI

GENTRYVILLE was the name of the settlement in Indiana in which Abe Lincoln spent these early days. It is well to reproduce one or two extracts from Mr. Herndon's book to give an idea of the exact kind of surroundings in which the youth of this remarkable man was spent. Thus the life is described by an old lady whom the indefatigable writer of this book interviewed—

We thought nothing of going eight or ten miles to church. The ladies did not stop for want of shawl, cloak, or riding-dress in winter-time, but would put on their husbands' old overcoats and wrap up their little ones and take one or two of them on their breasts. Their husbands would walk, and thus they would go to church, frequently remaining till the second day before they returned home.

And here is an even more delightful collection of details as to this period and this settlement—

The old men starting from the fields and out of the woods would carry their guns on their shoulders and go also. They dressed in deerskin pants, moccasins, and coarse hunt shirts. The latter is usually fastened with a rope or leathern

strap. Arriving at the house where services were to be held, they would recite to each other thrilling stories of their hunting exploits, and smoke their pipes with the old ladies. They were treated and treated each other with the utmost kindness. A bottle of liquor, a pitcher of water, sugar, and glasses were set out, now and then a pie or cakes. Thus they regaled themselves till the preacher found himself in a condition to begin. The latter, having also partaken freely of the refreshments provided, would take his stand, draw off his coat, open his shirt-collar, read his text, and preach and pound till the sweat, produced alike by his exertions and the exhilarating effects of the toddy, rolled from his face in great drops. Shaking hands and singing ended the service.

Similarly they were ready to go long distances for their amusements. They often danced through the night to the sound of a cracked fiddle, drinking whisky pretty freely.

XII

IT should be added to this description that the carousals were very much to the taste of all Abe Lincoln's relatives and associates. The Hanks family were especially prolific in the production of ne'er-do-wells and topers. A favourite stanza of one of the Hanks tribe is retained to immortality; it will give some idea both of him and of the young Lincoln's surroundings. This is the distich—

> Hail Columbia, happy land,
> If you ain't drunk I will be damned!

It throws some light also on Lincoln's disposition and training in these early years that he himself

was also an inveterate poetaster. The pious care of his friend and biographer has collected some specimens of Lincoln's young muse. I may dismiss them by saying that they are shocking doggerel—shocking in style, tone, in everything. They are mainly important as marking the long road which poor Lincoln had to travel between his early self and the genius he afterwards became.

There is another feature in this old life of his which deserves to be recorded. It accounts for some of the elements in his subsequent character. The primitive religion of the people among whom he grew up was strongly tinged with superstition.

They believed in the baneful influence of witches, pinned their faith to the curative power of wizards in dealing with sick animals, and shot the witch with a silver ball to break the spell she was supposed to have for human beings. They followed with religious minuteness the directions of the water wizard with his magic diving-rod, thought the fowl doctor wrought miraculous cures with strange sounds and signals to some mysterious agency. The flight of a bird near a window, the breath of a horse on a child's head, the crossing by a dog on a hunter's path, all betokened evil luck in store for some one. The moon exercised a greater influence on the actions of the people than the growth of vegetation and the sun and planetary system combined. Fences and rails could only be cut in the light of the moon, the potatoes were planted in the dark moon, trees and plants which bore fruit above ground could only be planted when the moon shone full; soup could only be made in the light of the moon, and it must only be stirred in one way by one person.

Though Lincoln's mind was essentially critical, and though triumphant analysis finally brought

him to entirely unorthodox views about accepted religious faiths, he, by a common but not infrequent contradiction, remained superstitious to the very end of his days. He was, says his biographer, "a fatalist to the day of his death." He believed in the significance of dreams and visions. And thus it was that he remained, in some of his weaknesses as well as in his elements of strength, a curiously typical American of the toiling classes to the end of his days. It was this thorough sympathy of his with every side of the plebeian life of his nation that helped to account for much of his popularity.

XIII

AND now came another flitting. Gentryville in Indiana, like the old home in Kentucky, was visited by the "milk-sick"; and besides, the settlers had made no way. Especially was change acceptable to old Thomas Lincoln — shiftless, nomadic, sanguine as ever. He had moved four times since his marriage, and, in point of worldly goods, was no better off than when he started in life. In March 1830, the whole tribe—thirteen in all—packed their few goods and chattels into a rude wagon. Over swollen streams, over muddy roads, the heavy wagon, groaning, creaking, sometimes positively refusing to go forward at all, made

its way. They spent a fortnight on the road to their new home in the State of Illinois. Few could then have anticipated that the tall and ungainly boy—who had just turned twenty-one years of age —dressed "in buck-skin breeches and coon-skin cap," was entering the State which, by and by, would help to raise him to the chief magistracy of one of the greatest of nations.

When the fortnight's travel was over, the settlers selected a spot on a bluff overlooking the Sangamon River, and resolutely set to work to clear the ground. One felled the trees, and one hewed the timber for the cabin; another cleared the ground of the accumulated growth of underbush. Young Abe was especially industrious. With oxen and plough, he and one of the Hanks family broke up fifteen acres of sod, and "Abe and myself," says John Hanks, "split rails enough to fence the place in." The delight of this passage is its splendid unconsciousness. For it was the split rails, thus tersely and dryly described, which afterwards played a prominent part in the history of a great nation and an awful struggle. Many years afterwards these same rails were brought into a great Presidential convention. The sight of this homely work of young Abe Lincoln's hands helped to produce the enthusiasm—the sense of his thorough Americanism, —the sense of all his community of experience with the lives, the thoughts, and the destinies of the masses of the people,—which made him the over-

whelmingly popular idol, and helped to carry him to the highest seat of power the votes of men are capable of bestowing.

XIV

ONE of the school-masters of my boyhood had a very sensible little son of an extremely practical turn of mind. When the time came for his study of Plato he expressed considerable dissent from the generally-accepted view of the central figure in Plato's series of dramas. He could not see the fun of Socrates going about the market and spending all his time in mere talk with the neighbours. He was not an American boy, and the American vocabulary had not then made its successful inroads upon our own tongue, else he would have expressed his meaning and his scorn by speaking of the great Athenian philosopher as a "loafer." Well, Abe Lincoln was essentially like Socrates in some respects, including—as will by and by be seen—some of his domestic experiences. His chief pastime was to go about among the neighbours, and to discuss with them all the great subjects of human thought. He was a little like Socrates, too, in his love for allegory and parable. He was, in short, emphatically a "loafer."

The accepted theory, of course, is that a man born to manual labour is a guilty thing if he should

ever seek to rise above it, and show a greater inclination for intellectual than mere physical labour: and we have seen already how profoundly poor young Abe Lincoln had disgusted one of his early employers because he showed so much greater inclination for telling a good story than for splitting rails. But it is absurd to blame any man for preferring the kind of work for which Nature has intended him; and Nature never spoke in plainer terms than in the case of Abraham Lincoln. He was a born politician. Nobody knew this better than Lincoln himself. He had moments of self-distrust, he was nearly always despondent; but he never lacked at bottom the consciousness of his great powers. But like a good many other men of political genius, he was a very poor hand at the management of his own small life. From old Thomas Lincoln there came the shiftlessness—the unsound finance—the nomadic blood; just as from Nancy Hanks came the fervour, the rhetoric, the mysticism, and the overflowing gloom of his temperament.

For years, then, our poor Lincoln is what he himself called "floating driftwood." He is torn by the desire for learning, for distinction, for command; but in the meantime the day's meal has to be earned, and for many a year he has no better weapon for doing so than his long muscular arms and his powerful frame. For instance, it is recorded of him that he made 3000 rails for Major

Warwick, walking daily three miles to his work. This was all in the immediate vicinity of his father's home. His first visit to the big world outside his new home in Illinois was on a trip down the Mississippi to New Orleans. The trip was undertaken under the auspices of a poor, flighty, good-natured, foredoomed dreamer named Offut—one of the men who sometimes reach to millions in a country of rapidly-acquired fortunes; who, more frequently, fly high and then sink into the abyss and are lost. Offut had a tremendous scheme for taking a boatful of goods to New Orleans; but when Abe Lincoln and Johnston, his step-brother, and Hanks, another relative, arrived at Springfield, they found Offut full of merriment and whisky, but without any boat. The new-comers had nothing for it but to build the boat. First they constructed a shanty as the temporary dwelling, Lincoln acting as cook. In four weeks they had built the boat, and the journey began.

The remuneration of the Lincoln party was to be a shilling a day, and three pounds at the end of the journey. That journey must have been full of dangers and discomforts—not, probably, that Abe minded the danger, for he was absolutely devoid of physical fear,—or that he was conscious of the discomforts in the glory of the great opening world. It was during this journey that an event took place which coloured his own thoughts, and through that, has helped to transform the world. He saw slavery

for the first time in its naked and brutal manifestations, for New Orleans was the metropolis of the slave trade. Above all things he saw a slave auction, with a poor young woman subjected to mauling after the fashion of an animal for sale; and there and then he is said to have acquired that hatred of the institution which coloured for ever afterwards his opinion and his policy.

The whole thing was so revolting that Lincoln moved away from the scene in a deep feeling of "incomparable hate." Bidding his companions follow him he said, "By God, boys, let's get away from this. If ever I get a chance to hit that thing"—meaning slavery—"I'll hit it hard." This incident was furnished me in 1865 by John Hanks. I have also heard Mr. Lincoln refer to it himself.

It will illustrate the poverty of our poor Abe at this period of his life that he and his friends had to make their way home on foot from St. Louis to their cabins in Illinois.

XV

ABE has not yet ceased to regard his physical strength and courage as his chief distinction. He has a contest with Daniel Needham, a famous wrestler, and soon overcomes him. It is about this time, too, that Offut, above-mentioned, who was one of Abe Lincoln's earliest admirers, boasts that his *protégé* "could outrun, whip, or throw down

any man in Sangamon county." This was a boast which, when made in those times and in that particular district, was certain to be challenged. There was a rowdy and violent little colony in Clary's Grove, near New Salem, the Illinois village in which Offut, after his return from the trip to New Orleans, had resolved to seek fortune; and everybody feared the daring, the strength, and the violence of the colony. And when Offut boasted that Abe Lincoln could beat any one in Clary's Grove, and was willing to back his opinion by a bet of ten dollars, an encounter became certain. Jack Armstrong was chosen as the champion of Clary's Grove. Lincoln

was over six feet four inches high, and weighed, as his friend and confidant, William Greene, tells us with impressive precision, "two hundred and fourteen pounds." The contest was to be a friendly one and fairly conducted. All New Salem adjourned to the scene of the wrestle. Money, whisky, knives, and all manner of property were staked on the result. It is unnecessary to go into the details of the encounter. Every one knows how it ended; how at last the tall and angular rail-splitter, enraged at the suspicion of foul tactics, and profiting by his height and the length of his arms, fairly lifted the great bully by the throat and shook him like a rat. Now by this act he established himself solidly in the esteem of New Salem, and secured the respectful admiration and friendship of the very man whom he so thoroughly vanquished.

In New Salem, for the first time, we find Lincoln employed on work which was not manual. He was appointed clerk to an election board, and

there is a picture of him on the election day which has a singular bearing on his future fortunes. For the very thing Abe did—"when votes were coming in slowly"—was "to entertain the crowd at the polls with story-telling."

My cousin, J. R. Herndon, was present, and enjoyed this feature of the election with the keenest relish. He never forgot some of Lincoln's yarns, and was fond of repeating them in after years. The recital of a few stories by Lincoln easily established him in the good graces of all New Salem.

XVI

MEANTIME the love of books was still upon him. There is always something pathetic in the painful efforts of the poor to acquire education; and Lincoln's story in this respect is not less, but rather more pathetic than the generality. What brought his ignorance more home to him was the intense sense he had of his powers of speech, if only he got the chance. There are curious stories of this oratorical sap bursting forth in fruit in unexpected ways—ways impossible in any country except one in which elections are always taking place, and people are always more or less "on the stump." Before he left Gentryville, his old Indiana home, he was one of the frequenters of the local "store," and there became a favourite story-teller.

His jokes and stories were so odd, original, and witty, all the people in the town would gather round him. He would

keep them till midnight. Abe was a good talker a good reader, and a kind of newsboy.

It was also characteristic of his tastes that he used to walk fifteen miles to the local court-house to hear the trials. There is also a story of his hearing a man making a speech, and then and there getting up and replying to such effect that the man acknowledged himself beaten, and was foreseeing and generous enough to encourage his boy antagonist "to persevere." And even before this, while he was still a labourer in the fields,

he could not resist the temptation to mount the nearest stump and practise on his fellow-labourers. The latter would flock round him, and active operations would cease when he began. A cluster of tall and stately trees often made him a most dignified and appreciative audience during the delivery of those maiden forensic efforts.

The boy used to attend with his father election meetings, horse-races, and all the other concourses of the primitive inhabitants, and in all of them was a marked character, equally formidable in an encounter of muscles or of wits.

But he lacked knowledge, and, on the advice of a New Salem friend,

he hunted up one Vanen, who was the reputed owner of Kirkham's *Grammar*, and after a walk of several miles returned to the store with the coveted volume under his arm. With zealous perseverance he at once applied himself to the book. Sometimes he would stretch out at full length on the counter, his head propped upon a stack of calico prints,

studying it; or he would steal away to the shade of some inviting tree and there spend hours at a time in a determined effort to fix in his mind the arbitrary rule.

Lincoln had a brief and not significant career as captain of a company in the Black Hawk war. To that episode—to which he afterwards used to allude rather scornfully—there is no necessity to further refer. It was after his return from the Black Hawk expedition that Lincoln made his first attempt to enter political life. He stood as a candidate for the State Legislature. Here is a delightful description of the appearance of the candidate and his style of address at the period—

He wore a mixed jean coat, claw-hammer style, short in the sleeves and bobtail—in fact it was so short in the tail he could not sit on it—flax and tow linen pantaloons, and a straw hat. I think he wore a vest, but do not remember how it looked. He wore pot-metal boots. His maiden effort on the stump was a speech on the occasion of a public sale at Pappville, a village eleven miles off Springfield. After the sale was over and speech-making had begun, a fight—a "general fight," as one of the bystanders relates—ensued, and Lincoln, noticing one of his friends about to succumb to the energetic attack of an infuriated ruffian, interposed to prevent it. He did so most effectually. Hastily descending from the rude platform, he edged his way through the crowd, and seizing the bully by the neck and seat of his trousers, threw him by means of his strength and long arms, as one witness stoutly insists, "twelve feet away." Returning to the stand, and throwing aside his hat, he inaugurated his campaign with the following brief but juicy declaration: "Fellow Citizens—I presume you all know who I am. I am humble Abraham Lincoln. I have been solicited by many friends to become a candidate for the Legislature. My politics are short and sweet, like the old woman's dance. I

am in favour of a national bank. I am in favour of the internal improvement system and a high protective tariff. These are my sentiments and political principles. If elected I shall be thankful; if not, it will be all the same."

There is also a description of his method of canvassing from a contemporary eye-witness which throws a light on his methods—a light that, in the opinion of any candid and manly critic, it can well bear, though I have no doubt Philistine prudery will be as shocked as the *naïf* chronicler. Thus speaks Mr. A. T. Ellis, the chronicler referred to—

I accompanied him on one of his electioneering trips to Island Grove, and he made a speech which pleased his party friends very well indeed, though some of the Jackson men tried to make sport of it. He told several anecdotes, and applied them, as I thought, very well. He also told the boys several stories which drew them after him. I remember them, but modesty and my veneration for his memory forbid me to relate them.

Thus the inimitable Ellis on one of Abe Lincoln's special peculiarities—a peculiarity which now and then brought down on his head the embarrassing curses or the burdensome prayers of the clergy when he was fighting for the Union. The commentary of the judicious Herndon is at once the explanation and the justification of poor Abe's Rabelaisian tendencies—

"His story-telling propensity and the striking fitness of his yarns—many of them being of the bar-room order—in illustrating public questions, as we shall see further along in these chapters, was really one of the secrets of his popularity and strength.

XVII

BUT Lincoln, in spite of his stories "of the bar-room order," failed to get elected; and he had to return from the fairyland of the stump and of Kirkham's *English Grammar* to the ever-present and ever-sordid task of earning his daily dinner.

It occurred to him that keeping a store would be the ideal life for him, in preparation for something better. The store plays even still a very important part in the small Western town. The friendly and neighbourly citizens of a Republic, cut off from communication with the world,—in those days, too, with few newspapers,—and all filled with that love of conversation which is a fundamental American characteristic—would have been surprised if they had been told that a store had not to fulfil some other and higher function than that of supplying their whisky and their groceries. The store was, and indeed in some parts of America still is, the newsroom, the club, the discussion forum, even the school for scandal. Now Lincoln, as I have said, was an inveterate "loafer," a tireless talker, a *raconteur* of inexhaustible resource, of splendid and wide powers, full of wit, of a retentive memory. Above all, he had that touch of mimetic power without which the *raconteur* is never really com-

plete. The store, with its long pauses between work,—pauses to be employed in reading the *Grammar* and Blackstone's *Commentaries*,—with its friendly neighbours dropping in during the evenings, with its everlasting discussions, with its ever-attentive and delighted audience,—the store was the place above all others for Abe Lincoln on his painful passage along the road from illiteracy to learning and the Bar. You must have travelled in the United States, and through a good part of it too, to be able to completely figure to your mind the kind of life which Lincoln led in such a position, and to understand the character and the type which such a life produced. The love of the story is universal among Americans. Business men in London complain to me that Americans are so unbusinesslike, and the two chief counts in this paradoxical and unexpected indictment are that Americans remain so long on a visit to their places of business, seem oblivious of the passage of time, and, above all things, are so fond of telling lengthy anecdotes. But the truth is, an American illustrates everything by a story. The story figures not merely in serious political argument, in platform oratory—the story is welcome on the platform even in England—but also in private conversation. I have heard that at some of the greatest crises in the Civil War, the Cabinet was enlightened in its discussion of some tremendous resolve by a story; and I have seen Americans sit down for hours and

indulge in a series of soliloquies—each man telling his story, everybody else listening with perfect patience and genuine delight.

XVIII

THIS peculiarity is not only a national characteristic, but the growth of the circumstances of the country. The desolation, the isolation, the absolute cutting off from the world—above all things, the absence of everything joyous in life—which belong to a young settlement in the United States,—must be seen to be realized. At the same time all American citizens have been accustomed from their earliest days to take an active part and interest in all the civic duties of life. Not only have they cast their vote for a ruler mightier in many respects than any on earth, but everybody about them who is in a position of authority is the creation and the creature of their votes—the judge on the Bench, the police magistrate, the chief of the fire brigade, even to some extent the policeman who hales the sot to gaol, and the postman who brings the morning's mail. And this begets the constant spirit of discussion. Americans always strike me in consequence as the most dialectical race in the whole world, resembling in this, as in some other respects, a Continental rather than an Anglo-Saxon type of character.

Lincoln as a storekeeper proved a disastrous failure, mainly owing to a partner who was himself the best customer of the store, and who wound up with bankruptcy and delirium tremens. Our poor Lincoln had the same faults as a salesman which old John Romine found in him as a field hand. "He was too prone," says his biographer, "to lead off with a discussion of politics or morality, leaving some one else to finish the trade which he had undertaken." And his other defect was his extraordinary shyness towards women,—often a fateful and portentous fact in the young, the more so as it masks an excess of sensibility under an appearance of indifference, and is the proof of that very subjection to women which it often seems to angrily decry. But of that side of Lincoln's character I will not speak at this particular moment.

Lincoln was now in sore stress. He had to board at a miserable little public-house, and here, as one of his contemporaries put it, "he had a running bill to pay, and nothing to pay it with." He had still to trust to his stalwart arms for bread, and had the dreariest of all resources—odd jobs. One day he would split rails; the next he would take a turn at helping in the store. He was lucky enough to obtain some work as an assistant-surveyor to the district, getting the post from a strong political opponent with a manful declaration of his own political principles which did him

honour. Meantime, he joined in all the sports of the wild time—it is necessary to tell this, so that one may have a really true idea of what Lincoln was like—went to horse-races and to cock-fighting; gave public exhibitions of his extraordinary strength, anticipating the so-called "strong men" of our own day; and of course talked incessantly and incessantly told stories, questionable and otherwise.

XIX

AND in the midst of it all he kept on bravely at his studies; dropping under a tree, when working in the field, to read Blackstone, returning to a book in the store after he had served a customer, reading by night at the friendly light of some acquaintance's hearth, or kindling the shavings and remnants of wood in a cooper's shop, and lying by its light till far into the night. And all through the fellow manages to have friends who pull him through every misfortune; and he has friends because he deserves them. Here is a story of this period of Lincoln's life which throws a pleasant light upon his character—

He had an unfailing disposition to succour the weak and unfortunate, and was always in his sympathy struggling with the under dog in the fight. He was once overtaken when about fourteen miles from Springfield by one Chandler, whom he knew slightly, and who already having driven twenty

miles was hastening to reach the land office before a certain other man who had gone by a different road. Chandler explained to Lincoln that he was poor and wanted to enter a small tract of land which adjoined his, and that another man of considerable wealth had also determined to have it, and had mounted his horse and started for Springfield. "Meanwhile my neighbours," continued Chandler, "collected and advanced me the necessary hundred dollars, and now if I can reach the land office first I can secure the land." Lincoln noticed that Chandler's horse was too much fatigued to stand fourteen miles more of a forced march, and he therefore dismounted from his own and turned him over to Chandler, saying, "Here's my horse—he is fresh and full of grit; there's no time to be lost! Mount him and put him through; when you reach Springfield put him up at Herndon's tavern, and I'll call and get him." Thus encouraged Chandler moved on, leaving Lincoln to follow on the jaded animal. He reached Springfield over an hour in advance of his rival, and thus secured the coveted tract of land. By nightfall Lincoln rode leisurely into town, and was met by the now radiant Chandler, jubilant over his success.

Finally, as to this epoch of his life. He stood for the State Legislature a second time, and was elected. He was so poor that he had to borrow two hundred dollars to get a suit of clothes. He paid the money back—as he paid all his debts—honourably and punctually. He was a bad financier, but he was not a dishonest one.

XX

HERE I leave Lincoln as a politician to turn to the other side of his nature—to describe Lincoln the man, and especially in his relations to women.

I have alluded to the fact that Lincoln was extremely shy with women. There is a picture of him when he was an assistant in keeping a store, which will serve to paint him at the same time and explain this peculiarity—

He always disliked to wait on the ladies, preferring to wait, he said, on the men and the boys. I also remember he used to sleep on the store-counter when they had too much company at the tavern. He wore flax and tow linen pantaloons—I thought about five inches too short in the legs—and frequently had but one suspender, no vest or coat. He wore a calico shirt such as he had in the Black Hawk war, coarse brogans, tan colour, blue yarn socks, and straw hat, old style, and without a band.

The friend who gives this description of poor Lincoln is of the opinion that his painful self-consciousness in the presence of women was due to the awkwardness of his appearance and the poorness of his dress. However, Mr. Herndon, his biographer, thinks that in addition there was downright painful bashfulness. Again Ellis, the friend to whom we owe the description of Lincoln's appearance, says—

On one occasion, while we boarded at the tavern, there came a family consisting of an old lady, her son, and three stylish daughters from the State of Virginia, who stopped there for two or three weeks, and during their stay I do not remember Mr. Lincoln's ever appearing at the same table with them.

It was natural that a man of this kind should feel deeply; and the evidence on the whole is

conclusive that an early love adventure of Lincoln's coloured and darkened all his life. I have already told how at one period he was obliged to lodge with an innkeeper named James Rutledge; James Rutledge had amongst his nine children a daughter named Anne. There are many descriptions of Miss Rutledge, some of them not quite consistent with each other; all coloured with that kindly love of extravagance which is one of the most curious characteristics of the Americans.

She was amiable, and an exquisite beauty, and her intellect was quick, deep, and philosophic, as well as brilliant. She had a heart as gentle and as kind as an angel, and full of love and sympathy. Her sweet and angelic nature was noted by every one who met her. She was a woman worthy of Lincoln's love. Miss Rutledge had auburn hair, blue eyes, fair complexion. She was pretty, slightly slender, but in everything a good-hearted young woman. She was about five feet two inches high, and weighed in the neighbourhood of a hundred and twenty pounds. She was beloved by all who knew her.

Mr. Herndon's account of Mr. Lincoln's love story with Miss Rutledge has been described as "highly coloured." Nicholay and Hay give only five lines to it in their voluminous record of the great President's life. But Mr. Herndon insists on the correctness of his narrative, and gives certain proofs of some of the main features. At all events, his story is that Lincoln fell deeply in love with the girl, and that he had a rival in the shop of a gentleman called McNamar,—I suspect an Irish-

man,—and Lincoln did not press his suit until the temporary disappearance of McNamar from New Salem left the girl free. Lincoln at first was unsuccessful in his suit because the girl's heart was with McNamar, but as time went on and no promised communications arrived from the absent lover, she listened to Lincoln's suit. The girl must have been always delicate, but it is suggested that her health was undermined by the conflict between the old love and the new. At all events she was taken ill, and gradually wasted away. She asked for Lincoln several times as she was dying; he came and stood beside her, and had an interview with her alone, and in a few days afterwards, she died.

Mr. Herndon quotes a letter from one of Miss Rutledge's brothers written many years afterwards, which contains this passage—

> When he first came to New Salem, and up to the day of Anne's death, Mr. Lincoln was all life and animation. He seemed to see the bright side of every picture.

Another of Mr. Herndon's correspondents declares that Lincoln once said to her, speaking of Miss Rutledge's grave—"My heart is buried there." Mr. Herndon gives proofs of further and even deeper signs of grief.

This part of the story is so interesting, and throws so lurid a light upon Lincoln's character, that I quote Mr. Herndon's words in full—

When he returned from the visit to the grave of Miss Rutledge, he stopped at the house of a friend, who relates that his face showed signs of no little mental agony. "He was very much distressed," is the language of this friend, "and I was not surprised when it was rumoured subsequently that his reason was in danger." One of Miss Rutledge's brothers says—"The effect upon Mr. Lincoln's mind was terrible. He became plunged in despair, and many of his friends feared that reason would desert her throne. His extraordinary emotions were regarded as strong evidence of the existence of tenderest relations between himself and the deceased." The truth is, Mr. Lincoln was strangely wrought up over the sad ending of the affair. He had fits of great mental depression, and wandered up and down the river and into the woods woefully abstracted, at times in the deepest distress. If, when we read what the many credible persons who knew him at the time tell us, we do not conclude that he was deranged, we must admit that he walked on the sharp and narrow line which divides sanity from insanity. To one friend he complained that the thought "that the snows and rains fall upon her grave filled him with indescribable grief." He was watched with special vigilance during damp, stormy days, under the belief that dark and gloomy weather might produce such a depression of spirits as to induce him to take his own life. His condition finally became so alarming that his friends consulted together and sent him to the house of a kind friend, Bowling Greene, who lived in a secluded spot hidden by the hills, a mile south of town. Here he remained some weeks under the care and ever-watchful eye of this noble friend, who gradually brought him back to reason, or, at least, a realization of his true condition. In the years that followed Mr. Lincoln never forgot the kindness of Greene through those weeks of suffering and peril. In 1842, when the latter died, and Lincoln was selected by the Masonic lodge to deliver the funeral oration, he broke down in the midst of his address. His voice was choked with deep emotion; he stood a few moments while his lips quivered in the effort to form the words of fervent praise he sought to utter, and the tears ran down his yellow and shrivelled cheeks. Every voice was hushed at the spectacle. After

repeated efforts he found it impossible to speak, and strode away, bitterly sobbing, to the widow's carriage, and was driven from the scene.

XXI

By and by it will be seen that Lincoln had in him a morbid strain, and this will largely explain and justify Mr. Herndon's description of the effect the catastrophe had upon him. However, some time afterwards Lincoln is found paying his addresses to another and different woman, Mary Owen, of Kentucky, who seems to have been the very opposite to the poor, fair-haired, delicate Anne Rutledge. She is described as tall and portly, with large blue eyes, jovial and social; and certainly the picture of her in Mr. Herndon's volume, which is taken from a daguerreotype, gives you the impression of a thoroughly sonsey woman. Miss Owen liked Mr. Lincoln, but he was not able to touch her heart, and the way this is explained is one of the charms of the early letters. "I thought," she says, "Mr. Lincoln was deficient in those little links which make up the chain of woman's happiness." It is only an American woman who would express herself in such highly figurative language. Undoubtedly Mr. Lincoln at this period was not a ladies' man.

Before I go to the final and fatal chapter in Lincoln's love history, let me pause for a moment

to give a few more particulars of his financial position. He had been elected, and he had been soon afterwards re-elected to the State Legislature; he belonged to the party of extravagance which demanded all kinds of expensive projects for the development of Illinois, and in time helped, with the rest of his political comrades, to bring about almost a bankrupt state of affairs; whereupon Mr. Herndon remarks that Mr. Lincoln never had what some people call "money sense."

By reason of his peculiar nature and construction he was endowed with none of the elements of a political economist. He was enthusiastic and theoretic to a certain degree; could take hold of, and wrap himself up in, a great moral question; but in dealing with the financial and commercial interests of a community or government, he was equally as inadequate as he was ineffectual in managing the economy of his own household. In this respect alone I always regarded Mr. Lincoln as a weak man.

Lincoln, in the meantime, was anxious to add the profession of law to his precarious position, so he resolved to settle down in Springfield, with which as a legislator he had already become acquainted. Never, assuredly, did a lawyer start out with capital so small. When he took lodgings in Springfield "his personal effects consisted of a pair of saddle-bags, containing two or three law books and a few pieces of clothing."

He had ridden into town on a borrowed horse (relates Mr. Speed), and engaged from the only cabinet-maker in the village a single bedstead. He came into my store, set

his saddle-bags on the counter, and inquired what the furniture for a single bedstead would cost. I took slate and pencil, made a calculation, and found the sum for furniture complete would amount to seventeen dollars in all. Said he—"It is probably cheap enough, but I want to say, cheap as it is, I have not the money to pay. But if you will credit me until Christmas, and my experiment here as a lawyer is a success, I will pay you then. If I fail in that I will probably never pay you at all." The tone of his voice was so melancholy that I felt for him. I looked up at him, and I thought then, as I think now, that I never saw so gloomy and melancholy a face in my life. I said to him—"So small a debt seems to affect you so deeply, I think I can suggest a plan by which you will be able to attain your end without incurring any debt. I have a very large room, and a very large double bed in it, which you are perfectly welcome to share with me if you choose." "Where is your room?" he asked. "Up-stairs," said I, pointing to the stairs leading from the store to my room. Without saying a word he took his saddle-bags on his arm, went up-stairs, set them down on the floor, came back again, and with a face beaming with pleasure and smiles, exclaimed, "Well, Speed, I am moved."

XXII

THOSE who know the United States well are conscious of the fact that in spite of the general equality of Republican institutions—an equality that is very real in some respects—there is no country where social distinctions are insisted on more tenaciously. It is, perhaps, the very sense that equality knocks at every door, and peremptorily and in the name of the law demands entrance, which makes the different social grades so

anxious to limit the number of admissions inside their circles and houses. This family pride is especially strong among the natives of the Southern States. A peer of Norman descent is infinitely less conscious among us of the pride of birth than a Southern man or a Southern woman who have the blood of three known generations in their veins; and there is this allowance to be made for this feeling, that in a new, crude, rough country it has produced a type of courtly manners which one would associate with the best days of a fine old Continental court rather than with the pioneer settlements of a new continent.

The only true democracy of the world is to be found in the dense multitudinousness and the rough and tumble of a great city like our imperial London. To us, then, our good Herndon will often be a joy and a delight by the solemn seriousness with which he discusses the comparative social position of the early settlers of Springfield, Illinois, in what we would call their wooden shanties, and in what appears to us something like a wild encampment on the scarcely-conquered ground of primeval prairie and expelled Indians. But we must look at these things from the point of view of those who lived among them, and not from our own; and these differences, which to us appear so grotesque, had to Herndon and his townsmen, and, above all, to Lincoln and his future wife, a tragically real meaning. Let us have our laugh, by all

means, at the good Herndon, and at the picture of the curiously monotonous vanity and futility of human nature under so many different conditions; but let us also be human and unprejudiced and sympathetic.

Mary Todd was born in Kentucky, as was Lincoln himself, and came of what in the United States would be regarded as aristocratic stock. Her ancestors had been generals in the Revolution, in the first Indian war, and held high offices in the State Legislature, in banks, in the army. And now for one of our Herndon's inimitable and yet touching observations—

To a young lady in whose veins coursed the blood that had come down from this long and distinguished ancestral line, who could even go back in the genealogical chart to the sixteenth century, Lincoln, the child of Nancy Hanks, whose descent was dimmed by the shadow of tradition, was finally united in marriage.

In addition to the pride of birth, Mary Todd had the pride of what was considered in Springfield, Illinois, a very genteel education. On this point let us hear Mary Todd herself. There is some exquisite fun, and also some unconscious tragedy, between the lines—

I was educated by Madame Mantelli, a lady who lived opposite Mr. Clay's, and who was an accomplished French scholar. Our conversation at school was carried on entirely in French—in fact, we were allowed to speak nothing else. I finished my education at Mrs. Ward's academy, an institution to which many people from the North sent their daughters.

There is the whole story! And what a pathetic one it is after all, in the very pitifulness and pettiness of its pretentiousness! A knowledge of French, together with all the blood of all the Todds —this was the small social and literary capital which Mary Todd, and her neighbours too, thought more than adequate to give her aristocratic airs, and to justify her in looking down on a sad and poor man of genius, with his supreme though untrained mind, and to regard marriage with him as a *mésalliance* of tragic intensity! Again and again our simple and honest Herndon insists on this knowledge of French as one of the glories of Mary Todd. And what a revelation it all is, both of the pathetic ignorance and of the pathetic aspirations after higher things, of these poor men and women, who founded the first settlements of a great country!

XXIII

MARY TODD had a married sister—Mrs. Edwards, —living in Springfield; and thither she came when she was in her twenty-first year. It is significant of her character and subsequent career that the reason she had made the change was "to avoid living under the same roof with a stepmother." And now I shall let the good Herndon describe her in his own language.

She was of the average height, weighing when I first saw her about one hundred and thirty pounds. She was rather compactly built, and had a well-rounded face, rich dark-brown hair, and bluish-grey eyes. In her bearing she was proud, but handsome and vivacious. Her education had been in no wise defective; she was a good conversationalist, using with equal fluency the French and English languages; when she used a pen, its point was sure to be sharp, and she wrote with wit and ability. She not only had a quick intellect, but an intuitive judgment of men and their motives. Ordinarily she was affable and even charming in her manners; but when offended or antagonized her agreeable qualities instantly disappeared beneath a wave of stinging satire or sarcastic bitterness, and her entire nature was submerged. In her figure and physical proportions, in education, bearing, temperament, history—in everything she was the exact reverse of Lincoln.

Mary Todd "soon became one of the belles," saith our Herndon, "leading the young men of the town a merry dance." She "kept back all the unattractive elements in her unfortunate organization," and all the young aristocrats of Springfield could see was "her trenchant wit, affability, and candour," while the elders were impressed by "her culture and varied accomplishments." And then comes a delightful picture of our author and of Mary Todd. In the conversation of Americans, especially of those who have passed middle age and have been in political life, and where education has been picked up, there is a curious toploftiness that reminds one of a dead and gone generation of conversation and literature in our own country. In addition, the style has the curious flavour of

self-esteem, which is so essentially characteristic of self-made people in a land of social equality. Read all these things into the following extract from our Herndon, and you will gain much insight into American character and the American tongue—

> The first time I met her was at a dance at the residence of Colonel Robert Allen, a gentleman mentioned in the preceding chapter. I engaged her for a waltz, and as we glided through it I fancied I never before had danced with a young lady who moved with such grace and ease. A few moments later, as we were promenading through the hall, I thought to compliment her graceful dancing by telling her that while I was conscious of my own awkward movements she seemed to glide through the waltz with the ease of a serpent. The strange comparison was as unfortunate as it was hideous. I saw it in an instant, but too late to recall it. She halted for a moment, drew back, and her eyes flashed as she retorted—"Mr. Herndon, comparison to a serpent is rather severe irony, especially to a new-comer."

"The strange comparison was as unfortunate as it was hideous. I saw it in an instant, but too late to recall it." Isn't this almost too delightful as a picture of our young, conceited, toploftical Springfield buck? And is there anything in human document so eloquent of the poor conceit of our rustic belle as this—"She halted for a moment, drew back, and her eyes flashed as she retorted—'Mr. Herndon, comparison to a serpent is rather severe irony, especially to a new-comer'"? I haven't read anything for many days fuller of meaning, of sadness, of futility.

A further point in Mary Todd's character has to

be noticed. This is what one of her sisters says of her—

> Mary was quick, gay, and in the social world the most brilliant. She loved show and power, and was one of the most ambitious women I ever knew. She used to contend when a girl to her friends in Kentucky that she was destined to marry a President. I have heard her say that myself, and after mingling in society in Springfield, she repeated the seemingly absurd and idle boast.

And Lincoln was no less ambitious than the woman who was to be his wife. In the idealization which his romantic life and tragic death have inevitably produced, a legend has grown up which represents him as thoroughly indifferent, if not averse, to public honours. He appraised them, in his own heart, at their proper value, no doubt; and, as will be seen, he found them as much Dead Sea fruit as most of us find the prizes to which we sacrifice our lives. Moreover, he had a disposition so essentially melancholy, and a home so dark, that the real joy of life in any form could never be known to him. But to those who have studied the complexity of the human heart, and the generous hospitality of the human bosom, it does not appear in the least contradictory that Lincoln should have found success a disappointment and at the same time have had very keen desire for it, which is inevitable from the consciousness of great powers.

At all events, Herndon has no doubt upon this point; and properly disdaining to make his hero into

a spectral demi-god, says so. "The sober truth," he writes, "is that Lincoln was inordinately ambitious," and "how natural that he should seek marriage in an influential family to establish strong connections, and at the same time foster his political fortunes." And thus in a common ambition was laid, as Herndon thinks, the foundation of the dim resolve on both sides to get married.

The courtship began inauspiciously. "Mary invariably led the conversation," says her sister. "Mr. Lincoln would sit at her side and listen. He scarcely said a word, but gazed on her as if irresistibly drawn towards her by some superior and unseen power." And then comes another of those delightful touches in which the book abounds: "He could not maintain himself in a continued conversation with a lady reared as Mary was!" And then follows the significant sentence—"He was not educated and equipped mentally to make himself either interesting or attractive to the ladies."

"*The* ladies"—the prefix of the article has a whole world of meaning; it is a portrait, in a word, of provincialism, and especially of provincial pretentiousness. How often have I heard the same phrase in the small country town of my own boyhood!

XXIV

AND now there came a curious episode in the courtship, an episode which shows us an example of fact stranger than fiction. Throughout almost the whole of his career, Lincoln is dogged by one great name, the name of a rival in every respect worthy of him, in some respects more attractive; in culture, bearing, and training far his superior. It was a great oratorical and political duel between Stephen Douglas and Abraham Lincoln, which was in some respects the immediate cause of Lincoln's elevation to the Presidency and of the great Civil War. I wish I had time to draw a picture of Douglas —that strange, picturesque, fascinating, and typical American figure; but I must hurry on. Suffice to say that Douglas was for many years the chief force in the Democratic party, its orator, its organizer, its statesman, its idol. He, like Lincoln, was an Illinois man, and the great struggle between the rival parties in regard to the institution of slavery became in the end—and through a combination of circumstances—a duel between the keen rival wits and the ardent personal ambitions of these two men.

All this, however, is a long way off, at the period when Mary Todd is still a bright, caustic, self-conceited Springfield belle. She had declared that she would be the wife of a President, and undoubtedly at

that period, Douglas—accustomed to society, easy, self-confident, master of his tongue, and already distinguished—seemed a much more likely aspirant than poor, gawky, reticent, and humble Abe Lincoln. At all events, there was what Americans call a "desperate flirtation" between Mary Todd and Douglas, and many people think that so far as she ever loved anybody, Mary Todd loved Douglas. And all this time she was engaged to Lincoln!

The end of it was that she fell ill; that Douglas was warned off by her relations, and that Lincoln, stung in his pride, resolved to break off the engagement. One night Lincoln enters the store of Speed, one of the warmest friends of this period of his life. He draws a letter from his pocket, and asks Speed to read it—

The letter (relates Speed) was addressed to Mary Todd, and in it he made a plain statement of his feelings, telling her that he had thought the matter over calmly, and with great deliberation, and now felt that he did not love her sufficiently to warrant her in marrying him. This letter he desired me to deliver. Upon my declining to do so he threatened to entrust it to some other person's hand. I reminded him that the moment he placed the letter in Miss Todd's hand she would have the advantage over him. "Words are forgotten," I said, "misunderstood, unnoticed in a private conversation, but once you put your words in writing, they stand a living and eternal monument against you." Thereupon I threw the unfortunate letter into the fire. "Now," I continued, "if you have the courage of manhood, go and see Mary yourself; tell her, if you do not love her, the facts, and that you will not marry her. Be careful not to say

too much, and then leave at your earliest opportunity." Thus admonished he buttoned his coat, and with a rather determined look started out to perform the serious duty for which I had just given him explicit directions.

This Speed is a good fellow, one of those staunch and faithful friends whom Lincoln had a knack of making all through his life. He will not go to bed at his usually early hour this fateful night. "Under pretence of wanting to read," he "remained in the store below." "He was waiting"—good, kind creature—"for Lincoln's return." The sequel was what might have been expected, but let the story be told as Speed afterwards told it himself—

Ten o'clock passed, and still the interview with Miss Todd had not ended. At length, shortly after eleven, he came stalking in. Speed was satisfied, from the length of Lincoln's stay, that his directions had not been followed. "Well, old fellow, did you do as I told you, and as you promised?" were Speed's first words. "Yes, I did," responded Lincoln thoughtfully, "and when I told Mary I did not love her she burst into tears, and almost springing from her chair, and wringing her hands as if in agony, said something about the deceiver being himself deceived." Then he stopped. "What else did you say?" inquired Speed, drawing the facts from him. "To tell the truth, Speed, it was too much for me. I found the tears trickling down my own cheeks. I caught her in my arms and kissed her." "And that's how you broke the engagement," sneered Speed. "You not only acted the fool, but your conduct was tantamount to renewal of the engagement, and in decency you cannot back down now." "Well," drawled Lincoln, "if I am in again, so be it. It's done, and I shall abide by it."

It was so all through his life—Lincoln could never withstand a woman in tears. He himself

used to say that he was glad he had not been born a woman, as he could refuse nothing to distress or a well-told tale.

XXV

AND now there was no drawing back; and the sinister wedding-day approached. I must let Herndon himself tell the curious and strange story: it is a picture of a wedding almost unexampled in the intensity of its gloom, even in the many sad records of that great and fateful day of so many lives—

The time fixed for the marriage was the first day in January 1841. Careful preparations for the happy occasion were made at the Edwards' mansion. The house underwent the customary renovation, the furniture was properly arranged, the rooms neatly decorated, the supper prepared, and the guests invited. The latter assembled on the evening in question, and awaited in expectant pleasure the interesting ceremony of the marriage. The bride, bedecked in veil and silken gown, and nervously toying with the flowers in her hair, sat in the adjoining room. Nothing was lacking but the groom. For some strange reason he had been delayed. An hour passed, and the guests, as well as the bride, were becoming restless. But they were all doomed to disappointment. Another hour passed, messengers were sent out over town, and each returning with the same report, it became apparent that Lincoln, the principal in this little drama, had purposely failed to appear! The bride, in grief, disappeared to her room; the wedding supper was left untouched; the guests quietly and wonderingly withdrew, the lights in the Edwards' mansion were blown out, and darkness settled over all for the night. What the feelings of a lady as sensitive, passionate, and proud as Miss Todd were, we can only imagine—no one can ever describe them.

Meantime, what had become of Lincoln? He was not found till morning by Speed and his other friends, and then he was "restless, gloomy, miserable, and desperate."

His friends, Speed among the number, fearing a tragic termination, watched him closely in the rooms day and night. Knives and razors and every instrument that could be used for self-destruction were removed from his reach.

Our good Speed took him to his home in Kentucky, and there he poured into the sympathetic ears of Speed's amiable old mother all the gloom of his spirits. It is significant to mark one of the causes of his depression—

He was much depressed. At first he almost contemplated suicide. In the deepest of his depression he said one day he had done nothing to make any human being remember that he had lived, and that to connect his name with the events transpiring in his day and generation, and so impress himself upon them as to link his name with something that would redound to the interest of his fellow-men, was what he desired to live for.

Lincoln returned to Springfield, and after a while his peace of mind is partially restored. But he is tortured by the thought that he had broken his troth to Mary Todd, and thinks that she is dreadfully unhappy—which probably she was not.

"I should have been entirely happy but for the never-absent idea that there is one still unhappy whom I have contributed to make so. That kills my soul! I cannot but reproach myself for even wishing to be happy while she is otherwise."

And meantime our poor Abe—with his absence

of what Mr. Herndon calls the "money sense"—with his inherited blood from Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks—can't get on. "I do not think," he writes to his good friends in Kentucky, "I can come to Kentucky this season. I am so poor, and make so little headway in the world that I drop back in a month of idleness as much as I gain in a year's sowing."

He began to practise law again; and Mary Todd was finally fading from his memory, when a well-intentioned woman conceived the disastrous idea of bringing them together again. They met privately, were re-engaged, and at last Lincoln one morning announced to his astonished friends that he was going to be married that very evening.

If Lincoln was going to begin a life of misery, it was not without a pretty clear consciousness of what he was doing. A boy seeing him dressing for the wedding, and unaccustomed to see him so handsomely attired, asked him where he was going. "To hell, I suppose," was Lincoln's reply. And as he stood before the clergyman, he is described to be "as pale and trembling as if being driven to slaughter."

And here now is how Mr. Herndon sums up the complication of matters that led to this unhappy, inauspicious union—

To me it has always been plain that Mr. Lincoln married Mary Todd to save his honour, and in doing that he sacrificed his domestic peace. He had searched himself subjectively,

introspectively, thoroughly; he knew he did not love her. The hideous thought came up like a nightmare. As the fatal first of January 1841 neared, the clouds around him blackened the heavens, and his life almost went out with the storm. But soon the skies cleared. Friends interposed their aid to avert a calamity, and at last he stood face to face with the conflict between honour and domestic peace. He chose the former, and with it years of self-torture, sacrificial pangs, and the loss for ever of a happy home. With Miss Todd a different motive, equally as unfortunate, prompted her adherence to the union. To marry Lincoln meant, not a life of luxury and ease, for Lincoln was not a man to accumulate wealth, but in him she saw position in society, prominence in the world, and the grandest social distinction. By that means her ambition would be satisfied. Until the fatal New Year's Day in 1841 she may have loved him, but his action on that occasion forfeited her affection. He had crushed her proud womanly spirit. She felt degraded in the eyes of the world. Love fled at the approach of revenge. Some writer—it is Junius, I believe—has said that "Injuries may be forgiven and forgotten, but insults admit of no compensation; they degrade the mind in its own self-esteem, and force it to recover its level by revenge." Whether Mrs. Lincoln really was moved by the spirit of revenge or not, she acted long the lines of human conduct. She led her husband a wild and merry dance. If, in her time, she became soured at the world, it was not without provocation, and if in later years she unchained the bitterness of a disappointed and outraged nature, it followed as logically as an effect does the cause.

XXVI

NO human being who has had any experience in life ever ventures to declare dogmatically why it is that any marriage between any two individuals is unhappy. This is a secret which in all its recesses

is known to only two individuals; and they nearly always keep the secret well. The story of Lincoln and his wife is particularly obscure. A husband is utterly wanting in anything like real manliness who proclaims abroad the secret of his home troubles, and Lincoln was a thorough man. There were occasions when his stoicism, reticence, and high sense of honour broke down under the constant strain; and these moments give lurid glimpses of all he must have suffered. For a considerable period after his marriage, Lincoln was still what I must call an itinerant lawyer. In telling the story of Lincoln's married unhappiness, I am glad that now and then I shall have to make extracts which will bring before the reader pictures of the strange old life which lawyers of his type used to lead in the early days of American existence. Listen to our delightful Herndon, for instance, describing one of those expeditions; the homeliness and almost squalor of the life are exalted by its simplicity, good-humour, and brotherliness. The following passage, besides, gives us a good picture of Lincoln's method of work—

Frequently I would go out on circuit with him. We usually, at the little country inns, occupied the same bed. In most cases beds were too short for him, and his feet would hang over the footboard, thus exposing a limited expanse of shin-bone. Placing a candle on a chair at the head of the bed, he would read and study for hours. I have known him to study in this position till two o'clock in the morning. Meanwhile I, and others who chanced to occupy the same

room, would be safely and soundly asleep. On the circuit in this way he studied Euclid until he could with ease demonstrate all the propositions in the six books. How he could maintain his mental equilibrium or concentrate his thoughts on an abstract mathematical proposition while Davis Logan, Lovett, Edwards, and I so modestly and volubly filled the air with our interminable snoring was a problem none of us could ever solve.

The remainder of the picture is equally good, and it is especially valuable at this moment, for it gives us one of the first glimpses of that unhappy home which was the dark background to Lincoln's whole existence—

On Saturdays the court and attorneys, if within a reasonable distance, would usually start for their homes. Some went for a fresh supply of clothing, but the greater number went simply to spend a day of rest with their families. The only exception was Lincoln, who usually spent his Sundays with the loungers at the country tavern, and only went home at the end of the circuit or term. "At first," relates one of his colleagues on the circuit, "we wondered at it, but soon learned to account for his strange disinclination to go home. Lincoln himself never had much to say about home, and we never felt free to comment upon it. Most of us had pleasant, inviting homes, and as we struck out for them I am sure each one of us down in our hearts had a mingled feeling of pity and sympathy for him."

And then there comes another delightful passage, bringing out that strange contradiction in Lincoln's character of outward gaiety and internal gloom which has been the characteristic of so many sad men in all history—

If the day was long and he was oppressed, the feeling was soon relieved by the narration of a story. The tavern

loungers enjoyed it, and his melancholy, taking to itself wings, seemed to fly away. In the *rôle* of a story-teller I am prone to regard Mr. Lincoln as without an equal. I have seen him surrounded by a crowd numbering as many as two, or in some cases three, hundred persons, all simply interested in the outline of a story which, when he had finished it, speedily found repetition in every grocery and lounging-place within reach. His power of mimicry and his manner of recitation were in many respects unique, if not remarkable. His countenance and all his features seemed to take part in the performance. As he neared the pith or point of the joke or story every vestige of seriousness disappeared from his face. His little grey eyes sparkled, a smile seemed to gather up, curtain-like, the corners of his mouth; his frame quivered with suppressed excitement; and when the point—or "nub" of the story, as he called it—came, no one's laugh was heartier than his. These backwood allegories are out of date now; any lawyer ambitious to gain prominence would hardly dare thus to entertain a crowd except at the risk of his reputation; but with Lincoln it gave him in some mysterious way a singularly firm hold on the people.

XXVII

THIS is a sad picture enough in its mixture of comedy and tragedy; but it is only one of several throughout this book. Mr. Herndon's pictures, as I have already said, have been described as highly coloured; but he maintains their accuracy; and all I heard from my poor friend Ward Lamon, and from others, seems to confirm the general truth of the picture he has drawn.

Before describing any of these scenes of Lincoln's domestic life, I pause for a moment to discuss what

were some of the causes that led to this frightful unhappiness. The first was undoubtedly the infirmity of Mrs. Lincoln's temper. There are undeniable proofs of this infirmity, one of the most convincing being the fact that she was never able to keep a servant for any length of time. One servant she did keep for many years; but it turned out that this woman was in receipt of a dollar a week from Mr. Lincoln, as a reward for her docility—

The money was paid secretly, and without the knowledge of Mrs. Lincoln. Frequently, after tempestuous scenes between the mistress and her servant, Lincoln at the first opportunity would place his hand encouragingly on the latter's shoulder, with the admonition, "Mary, keep up your courage."

Another proof is that Lincoln used to obey every wish of his wife with almost slavish docility. "He always," says his biographer, "meekly accepted as final the authority of his wife in all matters of domestic concern."

One day a man making some improvements in Mr. Lincoln's yard suggested the propriety of cutting down some trees, to which she willingly assented. Before doing so, however, the man came down to the office and consulted Mr. Lincoln himself about it. "What did Mrs. Lincoln say?" inquired the latter. "She consented to have it taken away." "Then, in God's name," exclaimed Mr. Lincoln, "cut it down to the roots."

Often the unfortunate husband had to make public reparation for some of the offences given by his sharp-tongued and fiery-tempered wife. Hern-

don gives a touching little letter of apology to a newspaper proprietor. On another occasion a man had called to discuss with Mrs. Lincoln her rather unceremonious dismissal of his niece. He was received with "such violent gestures and emphatic language that the man was glad to beat a hasty retreat."

He at once started out to find Lincoln, determined to exact from him proper satisfaction for his wife's action. Lincoln was entertaining a crowd at the store at the time. The man, still labouring under some agitation, called him to the door and made the demand. Lincoln listened for a moment, but interrupting him he said, "I regret to hear this, but let me ask you in all candour, cannot you endure for a few moments what I have had as my portion for the last fifteen years?" These words were spoken so melancholy, and with such a look of distress, that the man was completely disarmed. . . Grasping the unfortunate husband, he expressed in no uncertain terms his sympathy, and even apologized for having approached him. He said no more about it, and afterwards he had no better friend in Springfield.

It was only after Lincoln's death that the world began to understand what he must have suffered and what was the real cause. His unfortunate wife was victim as well as assailant, for her evil temper, her constant outbursts, her fierce and persistent unreason, were all due to a partially unsound brain. After Lincoln's assassination, she stripped the White House of a vast quantity of things to which she had no right whatever; she collected quantities of silk dresses—which she never wore—until the floor of the store-room nearly gave way; and for a

year or two before her death it was her habit to immure herself in a perfectly dark room, using a small candle-light, even when the sun was shining out of doors. And thus, with the comprehensive charity of his profession, does a physician who knew her in these latter years sum her up—

> She was bright and sparkling in conversation, and her memory remained singularly good up to the very close of her life. Her face was animated and pleasing, and to me she was always an interesting woman; and while the whole world was finding fault with her temper and disposition, it was clear to me that the trouble was really a cerebral disease

XXVIII

So quoth our doctor; but to analyze a wife's tantrums and find them due to a "cerebral disease," as doubtless they were, is more satisfactory to science than to the unhappy husband. And it is clear that Lincoln throughout his whole married life was made steadily, persistently, and profoundly miserable by Mrs. Lincoln's vagaries.

A few more extracts will help to bring this out more clearly than I have yet done. Here, for instance, is a picture of Lincoln's Sunday which is tragic in its incurable sadness—

> He was in the habit, when at home on Sunday, of bringing his two boys, Willie and Thomas—or "Tad"—down to the office to remain while his wife attended church. He seldom accompanied her there. The boys were absolutely

unrestrained in their amusement. If they pulled down all the books from the shelves, bent the points of all the pens, overturned inkstands, scattered law-papers over the floor, or threw pencils into the spittoon, it never disturbed the serenity of their father's good-nature. Frequently absorbed in thought, he never observed their mischievous but destructive pranks, as his unfortunate partner did, who thought much but said nothing; and even if brought to his attention, he virtually encouraged their repetition by declining to show any substantial evidence of parental disapproval. After church was over the boys and their father, climbing down the office stairs, ruefully turned their steps homeward. As they mingled with the throngs of well-dressed people returning from church, the majority might well have wondered if the trio they passed were going to a fireside where love and white-winged peace reigned supreme.

There are two other pictures—one of which I will reserve to the close of this essay. The first is a description of Lincoln in his office by his partner.

Mr. Lincoln never had a confidant, and therefore never unbosomed himself to others. He never spoke of his grief to me, or, as far as I know, to any of his friends. It was a great burden to carry, but he bore it sadly, and without a murmur. I could, always realize when he was in distress without being told. He was not exactly an early riser, and he never usually appeared at his office until about nine o'clock in the morning. I usually preceded him an hour. Sometimes, however, he would come down as early as seven o'clock; in fact, on one occasion I remember he came down before daylight. If on arriving at the office I found him in, I knew instantly that a breeze had sprung up over the domestic sea, and that the waters were troubled. He would either be lying on the lounge, looking skyward, or doubled up in a chair, with his feet resting on the sill of the back window.

As I passed out on these occasions . . . before I reached

the bottom of the stairs, I could hear the key turned in the lock, and Lincoln was alone in his gloom. . . . Noon having arrived, I would depart homeward for my dinner. Returning within an hour, I would find him still in the office—although his house stood but a few squares away—lunching on a slice of cheese and a handful of crackers, which in my absence had been brought up from the store below. Separating from it at five or six o'clock in the evening, I would still leave him behind, sitting on a box at the foot of the stairway, entertaining a few loungers or killing time in the same way on the court-house steps. A light in the office after dark attested his presence there till late in the night, when after all the world had gone to sleep the tall form of the man destined to be the nation's President could have been seen strolling along in the shadows of trees and buildings, and quietly slipping in through the door of a modest frame house which it pleased the world in a conventional way to call his home.

There are those who maintain that Lincoln's wife was the real, though unintentional, cause of his political greatness. It was she who drove him out into the world, and it was the acquaintance he thus made with all the people around him which helped to make him what he was. If she had been a different woman, Lincoln, says one of his friends, "would have been buried in the pleasures of a loving home, and the country would never have had Abraham Lincoln for its President."

It must, too, be acknowledged that Mrs. Lincoln had her grievances. Her stupid family pride, her poor, petty, little gentility, were constantly shocked by her husband's want of the small manners of society. He remained to the end shy and awk-

ward in the presence of ladies. He did not make money; he dressed badly. "Mrs. Lincoln," says one of her relatives, "came of the best stock, and was raised as a lady. . . . She raised 'merry war' because he persisted in using his own knife in the butter instead of the silver-handled one intended for that purpose." On one occasion, our poor Abe —who had been lying on the floor reading, with the back of a chair for a pillow—answered the knock of two ladies in his shirt-sleeves, and completed his offence by observing that he would "trot the women-folks out."

Mrs. Lincoln from an adjoining room witnessed the ladies enter, and overheard her husband's jocose expression. Her indignation was so instantaneous she made the situation exceedingly interesting for him, and he was glad to retreat from the mansion. He did not return till very late at night, and then slipped quietly in at a rear door.

Of such trifles may conjugal tragedies be composed, when the lady of the house has a small mind, a quick temper, and the petty pretentiousness of the provincial *bourgeoise!*

As to poor Abe's clothes, they were a trouble to him, as we have seen, from his earliest days, and so they remained to the end. Nothing is more delightful in this biography than its thoroughly frank humanness. I dare say our charming Herndon has been greatly maligned because he has given so courageous and audaciously candid an account of his hero: he may console himself by

the reflection that the more human he has made him, the more lovable the hero has become.

Here is a picture of our Abe when he was circuit lawyer. It is to my mind a beautiful little sketch of a country lawyer in prehistoric times.

His hat was brown, faded, and the nap usually worn or rubbed off. He wore a short cloak, and sometimes a shawl. His coat and vest hung loosely on his gaunt frame, and his trousers were invariably too short. On circuit he carried in one hand a faded green umbrella, with "A. Lincoln" in large white cotton or muslin letters sewed on the inside. The knob was gone from the handle, and when closed a piece of cord was usually tied round it in the middle, to keep it from flying open. In the other hand he carried a literal carpet-bag, in which were stored the few papers to be used in court, and underclothing enough to last until his return to Springfield. He slept in a long coarse yellow flannel shirt, which reached half-way between his knees and ankles. It was probably not made to fit his bony figure as completely as Beau Brummel's shirt, and hence we can somewhat appreciate the sensation of a young lawyer, who on seeing him thus arrayed for the first time, observed afterwards that "he was the ungodliest figure I ever saw."

And again of this hat our Herndon speaks in his inimitable Americanese—

This hat of Lincoln's—a silk plug—was an extraordinary receptacle. It was his desk and his memorandum book. In it he carried his bank-book and the bulk of his letters. Whenever in his reading or researches he wished to preserve an idea, he jotted it down on an envelope or stray piece of paper and placed it inside the lining. Afterwards, when the memorandum was needed, there was only one place to look for it.

One of Lincoln's early glories was an invitation

to deliver a lecture in New York before the critical audience of the metropolis. The lecture was a great success, and became a powerful campaign document, but our poor Abraham was all the time afflicted by the fact that

the new suit of clothes which he donned on his arrival in New York were ill-fitting garments, and showed the creases made while packed in the valise, and for a long time after he began his speech, and before he became "warmed up," he imagined that the audience noticed the contrast between his western clothes and the neat-fitting suits of Mr. Bryant and others who sat on the platform. The collar of his coat on the right side had an unpleasant way of flying up when he raised his right arm to gesticulate. He imagined the audience noticed that also.

And finally, on the great day when he was delivering his inaugural address as one of the greatest of rulers, he was still tortured by his clothes. Herndon, his old friend, is present as he mounts the platform before the Capitol in which this ceremony takes place.

To me, at least, he was completely metamorphosed, partly by his own fault and partly through the efforts of injudicious friends and ambitious tailors. He was raising (to gratify a very young lady, it is said) a crop of whiskers, of the black-brush variety, coarse, stiff, and ungraceful; and in so doing spoiled, or at least seriously impaired, a face which, though never handsome, had in its original state a peculiar power and pathos. On the present occasion the whiskers were reinforced by brand-new clothes from top to toe; black dress coat, instead of the usual frock, black cloth or satin vest, black pantaloons, and a glossy hat, evidently just out of the box. To cap the climax of novelty, he carried a huge ebony cane, with a gold head the size of an egg. In these, to him,

strange habiliments, he looked so miserably uncomfortable that I could not help pitying him. Reaching the platform, his discomfort was visibly increased by not knowing what to do with hat and cane; and so he stood there, the target for ten thousand eyes, holding the cane in one hand and the hat in the other, the very picture of helpless embarrassment. After some hesitation, he pushed the cane into a corner of the railing, but could not find a place for the hat, except on the floor, where I could see he did not like to risk it. Douglas, who fully took in the situation, came to the rescue of his old friend and rival, and held the precious hat until the owner needed it again.

XXIX

IT has not been my purpose—as will have been seen—to give much of the public side of Lincoln's life. That is already well known, and the real novelty of the book before me is its picture of the inner man. I shall, then, assume his nomination and election to the Presidency, and come to the moment when he had to bid farewell to the humble surroundings and the humble friends of his youth. To my readers I hope I have made some of those scenes and persons familiar embodiments by this time. He visited the old home where his stepmother was still living, visited the unmarked grave of poor, shiftless Thomas Lincoln, and, stopping at Charleston, recalled the time when he had entered Illinois as an ox-driver. One man had brought with him a horse which the President-elect, in the earlier days of his law practice, had recovered for

him in a replevin suit. Another one was able to recite from personal recollection the thrilling details of the famous wrestling-match between Lincoln, the flat-boatman of 1830, and Daniel Needham; all had some reminiscences of his early manhood to relate.

It will be remembered that he had always loved his step-mother; the parting from her was one of the saddest and most significant episodes of this sweetly bitter time, and it brings out better than anything else the combination of gratified ambition, harrowing cares, and haunting foreboding which such a nature as Lincoln's was bound to feel at such a time.

The parting, when the poor old woman, with tears streaming down her cheeks, gave him a mother's benediction, expressing the fear that his life might be taken by his enemies, will never be forgotten by those who witnessed it. Deeply impressed by this farewell scene, Mr. Lincoln reluctantly withdrew from the circle of warm friends who crowded around him, and filled with gloomy forebodings of the future, returned to Springfield.

Thither came other friends of his youth also; and thither came also the haunting memory of that early, tender love with a gentle soul, which must have so often visited him in all the years of companionship with that other woman—hot, fierce, incalculable—to whom destiny, in one of its most ironic moments, had joined him. I will let our Herndon tell the story.

Isaac Cogsdale, another New Salem pioneer, came, and to him Lincoln again admitted his love for the unfortunate Anne Rutledge. Cogsdale afterwards told me of this interview. It occurred late in the afternoon. Mr. Nicholay, the secretary, had gone home, and the throng of visitors had ceased for the day. Lincoln asked about all the early families of New Salem, calling up the peculiarities of each as he went over the list. Of the Rutledges he said—"I have loved the name of Rutledge to this day; I have kept my mind on their movements ever since." Of Anne he spoke with some feeling—"I loved her dearly. She was a handsome girl, would have made a good, loving wife; she was natural, and quite intellectual, though not highly educated. I did honestly and truly love the girl, and think often of her now."

There also came the wife of the owner of that poor little inn, where Lincoln had boarded in that dreary epoch when he had not the price of a bed or a dinner. Hannah Armstrong had mended his breeches, had employed him to save her son from the gallows—there is a strange story about that episode which I have been unable to tell—and had since, from afar, watched his rise in the world.

She bade him good-bye, but was filled with a presentiment that she would never see him alive again. "Hannah," he said jovially, "if they do kill me I shall never die again."

XXX

LINCOLN might thus try to laugh it off, but the forebodings of his friends were shared by himself. Herndon and all Lincoln's other intimates declare that the certainty of his ending in assassination

rarely, if ever, left him. This apprehension of evil was part of a nature essentially morbid and melancholy as Lincoln's was. It was part of his heritage from Nancy Hanks.

Lincoln's melancholy never failed to impress any man who ever saw or knew him. The perpetual look of sadness was his most prominent feature. The cause of this peculiar condition was a matter of frequent discussion among his friends. John T. Stewart said it was his abnormal digestion. . . . The reader can hardly realize the extent of this peculiar tendency to gloom. One of Lincoln's colleagues in the Legislature of Illinois is authority for the statement coming from Lincoln himself, that "this mental depression became so intense at times that he never dared carry a pocket-knife." Two things greatly intensified his characteristic sadness: one was the endless succession of troubles in his domestic life which he had to bear in silence; and the other was unquestionably the knowledge of his own obscure and lowly origin. The recollection of those things burned a deep impression on his sensitive soul.

Our Herndon sums up the discussion with his usual good sense, and in his own inimitable style, thus—

As to the cause of this morbid condition, my idea has always been that it was occult, and could not be explained by any course of observation and reasoning. It was ingrained, and being ingrained, could not be reduced to rule, or the cause arraigned. It was merely hereditary, but whether it came down from a long line of ancestors and far back, or was simply the reproduction of the saddened life of Nancy Hanks, cannot well be determined. At any rate, it was part of his nature, and could no more be shaken off than he could part with his brains.

As I am about to give a domestic scene in the

days of Lincoln's greatness, I will precede it with a few words from a description of another scene in the days of his struggling life as a not very successful country lawyer. I quote one of his neighbours in his Springfield home. It is a delightful picture, and makes you love the simplicity of the man, and still more the simplicity of the life and manners of his country and people—things rapidly passing away in these days of the omnipotent and ubiquitous millionaire.

I lived next door to the Lincolns for many years—knew the family well. Mr. Lincoln used to come to our house, his feet encased in a pair of loose slippers, and with an old faded pair of trousers fastened with one suspender. He frequently came to our house for milk. In his yard Lincoln had but little shrubbery. He once planted some rose bushes, to which he called my attention, but soon neglected them altogether. He never planted any vines or fruit trees. Seemed to have no fondness for such things. He kept his own horse, fed and curried it when at home ; he also fed and milked his own cow, and sawed his own wood.

And now for a final scene. The married sister, at whose house Lincoln had first met his wife, was, it will be remembered, Mrs. Edwards. In the midst of the war, Mrs. Edwards paid a visit to the White House. Her simple, terse, unpretending narrative reveals the inner life of that home, and all the tragedy underneath its splendour, as eloquently as almost any human document I know. First here is a scene in the White House itself—

One day while there, in order to calm his mind and turn his attention away from business and cheer him up, I took

Mr. Lincoln down to show him the conservatory belonging to the Executive Mansion, and showed him the world of flowers represented there. He followed me patiently through. "How beautiful these flowers are, how gorgeous these roses! Here are exotics," I exclaimed in admiration, "gathered from the remotest corners of the world, grand beyond description." A moody silence followed, broken finally by Lincoln with this observation—"Yes, this whole thing looks like spring; but do you know I have never been here before. I don't know why it is so, I never care for flowers; I seem to have no taste, natural or acquired, for such things."

And then there is a walk in the park north of the White House. Lincoln had just lost his son Willie—

On the evening we strolled through the park he spoke of it with deep feeling, and he frequently afterwards referred to it.

And now for the final touch of pathos.

When I announced my intention of leaving Washington he was much affected at the news of my departure. We were strolling through the White House grounds when he begged me, with tears in his eyes, to remain longer. "You have such strong control, and such an influence over Mary," he continued, "that when trouble comes you can console me." The picture of the man's despair never faded from my vision. Long after my return to Springfield, on reverting to the sad separation, my heart ached because I was unable in my feeble way to lighten his burden.

And so Lincoln was left alone to that duel with the madness of his wife and the overshadowing gloom of his own inherited nature. This is the man who had to carry a people through one of the most awful of struggles; who had to play the leading

part in a tragedy with a million deaths; who was the very arch and keystone on whom weighed the Atlas-burden of a great nation, rent as by earthquake. And looking inside—away from the shouts of triumph or of defeat, of idolatrous love, of frenzied hate, of all those millions that adored or that cursed him—this is what we find him: a lonely, gloomy, smileless man, tied to the fiery wheel of an unhappy marriage, and of the heritage of woe that comes to some of us from the dim, remote, dark depths of our unknown progenitors.

MIRABEAU AND SOPHIE DE MONNIER[1]

THE influence of great men after death is almost as curious and complex a study as their influence during life. Often the burly shade is as potent to push past the frailer shadows as when they were both encased in their very different physical frames. More frequently in the land of memories, where the spiritual is the chief title to recognition, a genius crushed under adverse fortune,—a moral influence, which to contemporary Gigmanity represented naught but failure,—a lofty and beautiful but shrinking soul which dwelt in a rickety body, was paralyzed by a weak will, or retarded by a too-modest self-estimation—very often death brings to these vindication and compensation. It is hard to discover any law in these things; and at all events, even if there is a discoverable law, it is not

[1] *Les Grands Ecrivains Français—Mirabeau*, par Edmond Rousse. Paris: Libraire Hachette. *The French Revolution*, by H. Morse Stephens. London: Longmans. Carlyle's *Critical Essays*. London: Chapman & Hall. *The French Revolution*, by Justin H. McCarthy. London: Chatto & Windus. *Causeries de Lundi*, par C. A. Sainte-Beuve. Paris: Garnier Frères.

within my task in a short essay to go in quest of it. The line of thought is, however, immediately suggested by the curious hold the man, with whose life and character I am about to deal, still keeps not only on the memory, but on the affections of the generations which have succeeded him. Judged by accepted standards Mirabeau was an unredeemed rascal, over whose grave humanity ought to curse or weep, or lift the shocked and saddened eye. Even in the less rigorous—or, shall we say, less narrow?—ethics of genial human critics, there are passages in his career over which one has to blush. And yet the fact remains, this devil of a fellow has retained as great a hold on the affection as on the admiration of succeeding generations. Of him it is as true to-day as in the hour when he walked in his burly and sinful flesh, that he has "the terrible gift of familiarity," and that "*fond gaillard*"—or "basis of joy and gaiety," as Carlyle well translates it—which alternately attracted, puzzled, and exasperated his wonderful old father. In short, to-day, as more than a century ago, everybody loves Mirabeau.

I

WHEN Carlyle wrote his wondrous essay on Mirabeau, the documents as to the great Frenchman's life were much scantier than they are to-day. Carlyle was led into one very natural error: he

took the history of the family from the pen of Mirabeau himself. A less trustworthy authority on such a subject could not exist. In Mirabeau—as, perhaps, in most of the men who thrill multitudes by their tongues—there was a large histrionic element. With an ebullient imagination, with plenty of the *poseur* in his character, a Titanic supply of personal pride, and the tendency of the heaven-born rhetorician to put everything as picturesquely as possible, Mirabeau dressed up the family history in very brilliant feathers. Family obscurities were magnified into world-moving personages; small episodes into controlling events; commonplace and unnoticed adventures were wrought by skilful stage-carpentery, the limelight of a dramatic style and a vehement imagination, into scenes as symmetrical and exact as those which owe their existence to the hand of the playwright. Then pretension to noble birth was a tradition in the family: it had been fought for obstinately and resolutely by more than one ancestor; and, finally, Mirabeau, like most leaders of the popular forces who have stepped down from their natural places, had the weakness to raise the height of the pedestal on which he had formerly stood.

But, making all these abatements, it remains true that the family was a very strongly-marked one; and that our Mirabeau reproduced some of the most prominent characteristics of his strange

stock. The tradition is that the Riquettis came originally from Florence, settled down in Marseilles, and there prospered—half as nobles, half as tradesmen. In the sixteenth century the family was represented by Jean Riquetti, who lives again in the pages of Carlyle.

> They (the Riquettis) got footing in Marseilles as trading nobles (a kind of French Venice in those days), and took with great diligence to commerce. The family biographers are careful to say that it was in the Venetian style, however, and not ignoble. In which sense, indeed, one of their sharp-tongued ancestors, on a certain bishop's unceremoniously styling him "Jean de Riquetti, Merchant of Marseilles," made ready answer—"I am, or was, merchant of police here" (first consul, an office for nobles only), "as my lord bishop is merchant of holy water." Let his reverence take that. At all events, the ready-spoken proved first-rate traders; acquired their *bastide*, or mansion (white, on one of those green hills behind Marseilles), endless warehouses: acquired the lands first of this, then of that; the lands, village, and castle of Mirabeau on the banks of the Durance; respectable castle of Mirabeau, "standing on its scarped rock, in the gorge of two valleys, swept by the north wind"—very brown and melancholy-looking now!

The acquisition of the castle of Mirabeau brought into the family the name by which it is now universally known.

The men of the family, in early days, mated with women of a like type with themselves. As the father of Mirabeau put it, they had a singular talent in choosing wives, a talent which neither the terrible old Marquis nor his son inherited, it may be remarked.

One grandmother, whom the Marquis himself might all but remember, was wont to say, alluding to the degeneracy of the age—"You are men? You are but mannikins" (*sias houmachomes*, in Provençal); "we women in our time carried pistols in our girdles, and could use them too." Or fancy the Dame Mirabeau sailing stately towards the church font; another dame striking in to take precedence of her; the Dame Mirabeau despatching this latter with a box on the ear (*soufflet*), and these words—"Here, as in the army, the baggage goes last!" Thus did the Riquettis grow, and were strong; and did exploits in their narrow arena, waiting for a wider one. (Carlyle.)

II

BEFORE I come to the father and son, with whom we are mainly concerned, there is one other ancestor of whom I must speak; this was Jean Antoine Riquetti de Mirabeau. He lived in the days of Louis XIV., and in some respects he reminds us of the qualities and defects of his great descendant. There is a picturesque account—one of the many legendary and highly-coloured stories in Mirabeau's chronicles—of this man standing alone, and in spite of one hundred wounds, on a bridge, which became an important point in the battle of Cassano. He is said to have been saved by a miracle, and to the day of his death he had to have his neck supported by a silver collar; and he himself used to speak of Cassano as "the place where I was killed." "He was one of the men," wrote his son of him, "whose delight it was to

achieve the impossible." And at forty-two years of age—with his collar of silver—he married a young and beautiful woman, and by her had seven children, "without anybody," delicately writes my French authority, "ever dreaming of laughing at him."

This couple suggest and forecast much of what we know of the career of their grandchild; and, indeed, the study of the two is more like one of Zola's dreadful pictures of the iron and relentless law of heredity than a story of real life. That daring in face of a court which the great Mirabeau showed in due time, is but an echo of things said by his stern grandfather. The warrior—with his battered body, with his right arm gone, and with his silver collar—is brought by a friend to see Louis XIV., who is fond of such doughty soldiers. The King doubtless paid the warrior some courtly compliments—with this reward, that he got as a reply, "Sire, if I had left my flag to come to court and bribe some strumpet, I should have had more advancement and fewer wounds." It is recorded that the King politely affected a momentary deafness, but the distracted friend who had set out on the perilous enterprise of turning the soldier into a courtier, declared that in future he would "never present Jean Antoine to any but the enemy." Jean Antoine was a hard landlord to his tenants; but he defended them against that vast army of taxpayers and licensed robbers who represented the

old *régime*, and had a contempt for the bailiff and the sheriff's officer which he communicated to his descendants. In some respects, then, this Jean Antoine was a revolutionary before the Revolution; it is from him we must partly derive that tendency towards Liberalism of opinion which produced in good time the treatises of his son and the speeches of his grandson. He left his son a more questionable legacy in his ideas of parental duty. He substituted for the general French friendliness of intercourse between father and children, the cold and almost harsh reserve which then reigned in the families of the English aristocracy. His son was sent off to the army when he was but thirteen years of age.

When the son (writes Mr. McCarthy) waited upon the sire to say farewell, John Anthony, finding that the carriage had not yet come, and unwilling to waste any time in sentimentalisms, made Victor take up a book that was being read to him, and continue the reading until the carriage came. Then it was simply—"Good-bye, my son; be wise if you wish to be happy." And so, with no other or tenderer words ringing in his ears, the son turned upon his heel and went to face the world.

III

THE French writer discreetly passes over the final story of Jean Antoine's wife; but she lived till the days of her grandson, and was one of the hardest influences over his early years. And from

her, too, he must have inherited some of the instincts that went to his undoing. I quote from Mr. McCarthy's brilliant and not sufficiently well-known work on the French Revolution the following picturesque and thrilling picture of her later days—

Her long widowhood was firm, austere, and blameless. Her association with that grim ruin of a John Anthony had imparted a certain sternness to her nature. She had moulded herself, as it were, into a stony, uncompromising inflexibility, which lent a kind of Roman hardness to her relations with her children and the world. She did not love her youngest son, and she did not love the youngest son of her own eldest and well-beloved son. Much of the misfortunes of our Mirabeau's life may be traced to the severity of his grandmother. But that very severity of discipline and rule, that austerity of morality, only serves to throw into more terrible relief the last act of that rigid life. After eighty-one years of virtue and of piety, the widow of John Anthony was afflicted with the most cruel visitation. Her reason left her, and left her under peculiarly poignant conditions. Although the story of her affliction has been much exaggerated, it is certain that her madness led her mind in a direction very different from that of its lifelong course. The tortured spirit seems to have railed in unwitting blasphemies against heaven, the pure tongue to have uttered language of a gross impurity. It is inexpressibly tragic to think of this lofty nature reduced in extreme old age to abject insanity, accepting only the attentions of an old serving-man for whom she is said to have conceived a servile affection, and at moments, in brief lucid flashes, sending instructions to the religious to pray for her soul as for one already dead. Perhaps one of the strangest features of this amazing case is that with the delirium of the mind the favour of the body altered. Something approaching to the freshness and the forms of youth returned to the aged body, and gave an unnatural and ghastly air of rejuvenescence to the unhappy woman. For three years the victim

lingered in this case, devotedly guarded and tended by her son the Marquis. The letters exchanged between the Marquis and his brother, the Bailli, are touching examples of filial affection and filial grief. At last, in 1769, she died; her long and noble life of eighty-one years, her long and ignoble agony of three years, was sealed by the sepulchre of Saint Sulpice.

I dare say some of my readers will remember that terrible picture in one of Zola's latest books, in which he described the awful Aunt Dide—ancestress of all the Rougon-Macquarts—as she lay in her arm-chair, paralyzed, dumb, imbecile, upwards of a hundred years of age—her wild and stormy youth ending in this night of mind and crumbling body; and all the strange and fearsome children of her body carrying with them from her some trail of the nervous disease which she embodied. Is there not something very like this in the picture of this terrible grandmother in her old age of darkened reason and escaped passion? And in the vagaries and vices of her grandson—with his giant frame exhausted at forty-two—is there not something to bring before the mind the figures in Zola's ghastly portrait gallery, and to confirm their almost monotonous moral?

IV

I DO not intend to dwell long on the history of Mirabeau's father. We have all read of him; he has been the standing dish of wit and wrath—with

his contradictions of "friend of man," and enemy of his own household. Sent to the army when he was thirteen, to Paris when he was seventeen, he had a youth that was almost as stormy as that of his son. He was a constant attendant at the theatres; was one of a band of young rowdies that kicked up nightly disturbances; was the lover for some time of a pretty actress, sharing her favours philosophically with others—and then for a few years he went soldiering. By twenty-eight he had sobered down, and already had begun to consider those profound political problems to which the hideous poverty of France, the corruption in high places, and the work of Rousseau and the Encyclopædists were attracting all intelligent and original minds. It was these floating ideas which led to the most foolish and disastrous step of his life—disastrous not only to him but to his family, and above all, to his son. Mdlle. de Vassan had a large fortune, many lands, a great number of tenants; and the philosophic Mirabeau saw in all this the prospect of attempting those theories of his with regard to the government of the human race which were already seething in his brain. He never saw his wife until the day of the contract; and the loveless marriage ended—as so often is the case—in hideous quarrels, in public and clamorous scandals; in entire family division; and finally, in angry and enduring separation.

The Marquis Mirabeau had no sooner got pos-

session of the lands than he proceeded to make experiments upon them—costly, crude, and ruinous. He was fanatically proud of his family position and history; it was he who made the arrogant declaration that his family had made only one *mésalliance*, and that was when one of them married a Medici. And yet his opinions were practically democratic, and he tried at once to be a grand seigneur and a teacher of economic and political truth to his generation. The intricacies and redundancies of his style have hidden many of his real merits from those who have since tried to read him; but there are many passages in his works which antedate by nearly half-a-century the great principles that were still being fought for in 1789. M. Rousse makes several extracts from the famous work of the elder Mirabeau, which I have not time to quote; but they establish a fact which the eccentricities, inconsistencies, and cruelties of the old Mirabeau sometimes obscure, namely, that he was a man of real political sagacity, and that in some respects the son was only the mouthpiece of his father's written ideas; and finally, they show that there was some justification for the statement of the son, that of the two the father was the greater man. And it is certain that the Marquis had attained a remarkable and a very widespread reputation as a political writer long before his son was even heard of. This is what M. Rousse has to say, for instance, of the effect of the publication of the famous *L'Ami des Hommes*—

The publication of *The Friend of Man* excited transports of admiration in all Europe. In Paris it created a furore; fashion added its intoxicating favours to the delights of renown. Soon discovered under his philanthropic pseudonym, the Marquis was called by his assumed, and was nearly losing his real, name; people simply spoke of him as the "Friend of Man." A crowd formed to see him pass in the streets; he knew every intoxication of fame; eminent advocates quoted him in pleading before the High Courts, and the title of his book was even used as a signboard for shops.

In addition, the Marquis Mirabeau was one of the first to preach the doctrine of the Physiocrats —the forerunners of that gospel of the Single Tax of which we hear so much to-day, and in their time the first reformers who put forth anything like a reasoned-out remedy for the inequalities and iniquities of the hideous taxation of France at this period. I dwell on this side of Mirabeau's father. To understand the political, and, to some extent, literary greatness of the son, it is necessary that we should know that the blood of a *littérateur* and a political philosopher was in his veins, and was part of his heritage.

V

GABRIEL HONORÉ, the son, was born in 1749. Inauspicious and contradictory was his first appearance. He had an immense head, a twisted foot, two full-grown teeth when he came into the world; and at three years of age he had an attack of the

small-pox which permanently disfigured his face. "Your nephew is as ugly as Satan," wrote his father to his brother, the Bailli—one of the many terrible afflictions and humiliations which this son was to inflict on the father, for beauty was hereditary in the men as well as the women of the Riquetti family; and Honoré Gabriel was the first to break the tradition. The father watches the growth of this portent "without tenderness, without aversion," writes M. Rousse, "with the sulky curiosity of a naturalist studying a 'monster' whose classification he has not yet learned to make." He attempts to bring up the child according to his theories, and exhausts every scholastic means of disciplining his mind and character—not with much success. As Carlyle well puts it—

> The scientific paternal hand must interfere, at every turn, to assist Nature; the young lion's whelp has to grow up all bestrapped, bemuzzled in the most extraordinary manner; shall wax and unfold himself by theory of education, by square and rule,—going punctual, all the way, like Harrison clockwork. . . . At bottom the Marquis's wish and purpose was not complex, but simple. That Gabriel Honoré de Riquetti shall become the very same man that Victor de Riquetti is—perfect as he is perfect: this will satisfy the fond father's heart, and nothing short of this. Better exemplar, truly, were hard to find; and yet, O Victor de Riquetti, poor Gabriel, on his side, wishes to be Gabriel and not Victor!

But something of all this education does remain with Mirabeau. That memory of his is perfectly marvellous; and when he is a great Tribune, there

comes back to him some of the phrases and ideas he has had to learn as a rebellious and often disgraced school-boy. At five years of age he is placed under the charge of a M. Poisson, an enlightened tutor, and for five years this tutor laboriously crams the big head with all kinds of knowledge—Greek, Latin, history, philosophy. From his earliest years Mirabeau shows that passion for public appearances and public applause which is the master factor of his existence. His father, after his own crabbed fashion, describes him at eight years as a fine talker, "a comedian by instinct and from his very birth"; so much so that even at that age he appears on the stage of a small theatre which the faithful tutor has erected for him. When he is sent to a school at Paris, the same love of distinction, the same desire to be heard of and to make a public appearance, is his chief passion. "Capricious, unequal, oscillating between the black-hole and the seat of honour, as unmanageable in his success as in his failure," so M. Rousse describes him. And then comes an instance of that strange hold over others which was one of his most marked characteristics throughout his life—

> The master wants to expel him; his comrades protest, and insist that he shall remain—not that they loved him very much, but in their eyes he is a personage. The attention he attracts amuses them; his air of importance adds to their own dignity; without him the house would be empty. At seventeen years of age he covers himself with glory by declaiming a piece after his own style—a parallel between the

great Condé and Scipio Africanus. He begins to make a noise in the world. "The young eaglet," writes Bachaumont, "already soars in the same region as his father.

VI

LIKE all the other Mirabeaus, Gabriel Honoré has to begin as a soldier. His father is already convinced of his incorrigible iniquity; and by way of marking his resentment in the most cutting fashion, will not allow him to assume either of the great family names. The father's hated wife has an estate called Buffières; it is as Pierre de Buffières, a very ignominious substitute for Riquetti or Mirabeau, that our poor Honoré enters on his soldier's life. This does not cure him; he gambles, gets into debt, borrows from everybody—"sergeants, private soldiers, all were one to him," writes the angry father,—and finally begins a career, in which he is said to have had few equals, by seducing the daughter of one of the barrack officials. He spends five months in prison, gets a further term of imprisonment when he is caught after running away, and then is sent to Corsica, where Paoli is making his last attempt to rescue Corsica from France. It is a curious coincidence that at the moment when Mirabeau, eighteen years of age, is campaigning in Corsica, Letitia Ramolino, wife of Carlo Bonaparte, in the midst of flight and of

bullets and civil war, gives birth at Ajaccio to him who was known afterwards as Napoleon Bonaparte. It is characteristic of that sublime self-confidence which Mirabeau always felt, that this short campaign should have been quite sufficient to convince him that generalship was really his vocation. "What I am more than anything else," he wrote, "is a soldier. I have received from nature a power of taking an unerring and quick observation. There is no book on war in any language, living or dead, which I have not read. I can show articles of mine on every detail of the trade, from the most important subject down to the smallest points in artillery, engineering, and commissariat." Whatever other people might do, Mirabeau never doubted himself. When he was twenty-three Mirabeau followed the example of his father in making a marriage purely of convenience. Mdlle. de Marignan was a great heiress; she was betrothed to another; but Mirabeau, having made up his mind to have her, talked, wrote, flattered; and, finally—he is audacious and tasteless enough to avow it afterwards—so compromised the young woman that marriage became her only escape from dishonour. His marriage was characterized by almost that very same style of adventure as his father's. Like his father, he saw in the union but a means of gratifying his luxurious and extravagant tastes; with this difference, that his father wasted money in philosophic experiment as well as in luxurious

ostentation; while the son seems to have had no desires whatever for expending money in the interests of the human race. In fifteen months the scapegrace had managed to get into debt to the extent of 200,000 livres; he had borrowed from every usurer in the province, and his exasperated tradesmen had at last resolved to procure his arrest.

This was the moment when one of the many evil resources of the old *régime* came into operation. The father was able to get the son exiled by a decree from the King. Mirabeau was not in the least ashamed—he rejoices even afterwards over this stroke of luck—and his happiness is rendered still more complete when a little later his father obtains from a Paris tribunal a decree of suspension of civil rights. It throws a lurid light on the methods of the *régime* that this decree had the effect of giving Mirabeau immunity from arrest for debt. "Even to the last day of his life," writes M. Rousse, "the great bankrupt could defy the attacks of his creditors, owing to this humiliating immunity."

VII

MEANTIME, the loveless marriage has turned out disastrously at even an earlier period, and in even more vulgar fashion, than that of his father. Mirabeau doubtless began the infidelities; undoubtedly the wife followed the example; she took

as her lover, an officer in a musketry regiment. This led to an episode which throws a curious light on Mirabeau's character; and especially on its curious love of the theatrical—of publicity, and on its absence of all power of seeing the comic in his own conduct and character. I quote from M. Rousse—

> This lamentable accident caused the most profound surprise. But soon, taking things with a high hand, he gave to his domestic dishonour that theatrical and grandiose aspect which in this family made a tragedy out of every accident, an epic out of every episode. Overwhelming his faithless spouse with his scornful pardon, he thundered forth against the "infamous seducer" in a long letter full of apostrophes and prosopopœias in which all the rhetoric of the Nouvelle Heloise was scattered in tropes and figures. As, for example, "Unworthy mortal, never appear before me, for may heaven's lightning annihilate me if I do not destroy you."

This was followed by even a more extraordinary step. He learned that his rival was anxious to marry, but that there were obstacles in the way. One night nothing would do our Mirabeau but to go in hottest haste to the relatives of the young lady, and before he left, he had succeeded in making his rival a happy man!

This expedition led to one of his worst misfortunes. He had a sister—very much like him in audacity, in sharpness of wit, and probably also in looseness of morals. She involved her brother in one of her many quarrels; he had a wretched pugilistic encounter in the open streets with one of

her enemies; and as a result he was arrested and sent to prison—first to that Château d'If where the immortal hero of Monte Cristo was also in his day supposed to have been lodged. From the Château d'If—where a small love affair consoled his hours—he was transferred to Joux; and here it was that the passion began which was to do more to colour his life than any of its numerous predecessors and successors. It may be doubted whether Mirabeau could ever have been faithful and constant to any one woman; but what chance he had was destroyed by this last separation from his wife. She in her turn began to better his example; absence and disappointment did their work; and from this time forward their lives, as Carlyle puts it, "flow onwards in two separate streams, his to lose itself in frightfulest sand-deserts."

VIII

THE Castle of Joux, which is called an "old owl's nest, with a few invalids," is among the Jura Mountains. "Instead of melancholy main," writes Carlyle, "let him now try the melancholy granites (still capped with snow at this season), with their mists and owlets, and on the whole adjust himself as if for permanence or continuance there on a pension of 1200 francs, fifty pounds a year, since he could not do with five hundred." But close to the

fortress of Joux is the small and melancholy border town of Pontarlier. The commandant of the fortress was amiable, loved society, and, although old, was smitten with the charms of a Mdme. Sophie de Monnier, wife of a high judicial officer. The commandant generously allowed Mirabeau to accompany him; and thus this dangerous guest enters into the Monnier household—to its destruction and likewise to his own. If the guest was dangerous, the household was just in the position to provoke his worst form of intervention. M. de Monnier was in his seventy-fifth year; Mdme. de Monnier was twenty-one. In the pages of Carlyle, as in those of many another English writer, Sophie de Monnier is a highly romantic figure; in the pages of the realist and sober French author, whose footsteps I am following, most of the glorious clouds in which she dwells, fade into merest mirage. First let us hear Carlyle's description of this strange wooing. What it may want in exactitude it makes up for in splendid picturesqueness.

Fancy what an effect the fiery eloquence of a Mirabeau produced in this sombre household: one's young girl-dreams incarnated, most unexpectedly, in this wild-glowing mass of manhood, though rather ugly; old Monnier himself gleaming up into a kind of vitality to hear him! Or fancy whether a sad-heroic face, glancing on you with a thankfulness like to become glad-heroic, were not——? Mirabeau felt, by keen symptoms, that the sweetest, fatalest incantation was stealing over him, which could only lead to the devil for all parties interested. He wrote to his wife, entreating, in the name of Heaven, that she would come to him: thereby might the

sight of his duties fortify him; he meanwhile would at least forbear Pontarlier. The wife "answered by a few icy lines, indicating, in a covert way, that she thought me not in my wits." He ceases forbearing Pontarlier; sweeter is it than the owl's nest: he returns thither, with sweeter and ever sweeter welcome; and so——!

IX

So far Carlyle. M. Rousse is much less charitable. Naturally he does not—being a Frenchman—find it either unnatural or very shocking that a young woman tied to an old husband should love this strange young man, nor that he should not resist his passion; but "to obtain full forgiveness," he adds, "these forbidden lovers should, more than any others, have maintained their delicacy, the ideal tenderness and that inviolable fidelity which should have kept together for ever two hearts that had thus freely given themselves up to each other." But, as everybody knows, this is not what happened. "Sophie de Monnier," says our less romantic Frenchman, "was not at her first offence." And then he goes on to analyze her passion, as described in the famous correspondence, and finds that it is gross, animal, and vulgar.

Unfortunately for Sophie de Monnier and Mirabeau, our fierce young lover is not the only one who has been caught by Sophie's charms. The commandant of the Castle of Joux "had been

making some pretensions to Sophie himself." "He was," writes his successful rival, "but forty or five-and-forty years older than I; my ugliness was not greater than his, and I had the advantage of being an honest man." All these disadvantages were but further reasons for jealousy to the commandant, who first anonymously warns the deceived husband of the woman, and then writes to the terrible father of the man. The result is, that Sophie is threatened with all kinds of punishment; is sent to her own home at Dijon; and will be sent later on to a convent if she repent not of her lawless love. For Mirabeau there is even worse punishment in store. "I have been lucky enough," writes the old Marquis, "to obtain Mont St. Michel, in Normandy. I think that prison good, because there is first the castle itself, then a ringwork all round the mountains, and after that a pretty long passage among the sands, where you need guides to avoid being drowned in the quicksands."

X

MIRABEAU never went to Mont St. Michel; but what a valuable thing is this description of this prison in giving us an idea of the terrible old man who brought him into being. Mirabeau and Sophie de Monnier resolved that there was nothing for it but flight. After innumerable adventures—which

sound to us in these days like the echo of an unreal and spectral world—with post-chaises, wadings of streams, disguises, bailiffs employed by the old Marquis—Mirabeau escapes, first to Switzerland. One night, Sophie de Monnier, "in man's clothes, is scaling the Monnier garden wall at Pontarlier; is crossing the Swiss Marches, wrapped in a cloak of darkness, borne on the wings of love and despair; Gabriel Honoré, wrapped in the like cloak, borne on the like vehicle, is gone with her to Holland—thenceforth a broken man" (Carlyle). This adventure did more, probably, than any other to make that public reputation for outrageous immorality, and—a perhaps more formidable offence in French eyes—for defiance of the convenances, which, later on, was to stand as a high, dark wall, not merely between Mirabeau and honour, but between France and her possible saviour. Legal action was taken. Mirabeau, in his absence, was condemned for abduction and robbery, and a paper effigy of him was beheaded.

XI

ALL these, and many other things, one can forget and forgive in Mirabeau during these days when he and Sophie de Monnier lived in Holland together. They dwelt in cheap and small rooms in an old house in Amsterdam, and for nearly a year they knew all the woes and all the delight of

love, with hunger, pursuit, separation, and perchance death, ever ready to knock at the door. It is a period which helped to make, as also to destroy, Mirabeau. He had to earn bread, and to earn it by means then, even more than now, among the hardest, most precarious, most trying that man can know: for he was a Grub Street hack. His industry and his versatility were almost incredible. He translated and produced pamphlets, books, and learned political treatises, and a questionable erotic collection; he turned his hand to everything and anything which his hard Dutch taskmasters asked him to try. Sophie is equally heroic. She "sews and scours beside him with her soft fingers, not grudging it," saith Carlyle.

There are few passages in Carlyle more beautiful than the page which tells the story of this period in Mirabeau's life. I have given one passage; let me quote another for a reason other than my immediate work of borrowing materials to make a complete picture of Mirabeau—

> The wild man and his beautiful, sad-heroic woman lived out their romance of reality, as well as was to be expected. Hot tempers go not always softly together; neither did the course of true love, either in wedlock or in elopement, ever run smooth. . . With quarrel and reconcilement, tears and heart-effusion; sharp tropical squalls, and also the gorgeous effulgence and exuberance of genial tropical weather. It was like a little Paphos islet in the middle of blackness; the very danger and despair that environed it made the islet blissful—even as in virtue of death, life to the fretfulest becomes tolerable, becomes sweet, death being so nigh. At any hour

might not king's exempt or other dread alguazil knock at our garret establishment, here "in the Kalbestrand, at Lequesne the tailor's," and dissolve it? Gabriel toils for Dutch booksellers, bearing their heavy load; translating Watson's *Philip II.*; doing endless Gibeonite work: earning, however, his gold louis a day.

And then comes the passage I have quoted already, "Sophie sews and scours with her soft hands," and so on. Can you not read between the lines of this passage and see another household than Mirabeau's and Sophie de Monnier's described by it? The mighty Scotchman, who writes these lines, is also at the stage of his life when the bookseller can demand his hack work with less wage, perchance, than even the single louis a day. There is another couple, too, of which it could be said that "hot tempers go not always softly together!" And Carlyle is separated but by a wall from another, and in outward, though perhaps not in inner, life, very different being from Sophie—whose "soft fingers" have to sew and scour. Can you not fancy Carlyle blotting his manuscript with a tear as he writes these lines, half whose gloom doubtless comes from his own personal experiences? And, after all, which household was the more miserable? Give me for choice the life of Mirabeau and his Sophie, with all its misery then; its final rupture; its tragic endings to both—rather than the long, silent, dismal struggle between Carlyle and his wife—between both and vengeful

Nature, which in the case of Mrs. Carlyle had to end in a death as sudden as that of Sophie de Monnier's.

XII

"AH! at the end of some eight months . . . enter the alguazil," says Carlyle. The fugitives had been betrayed; the Dutch Government refused to protect their right of asylum against a father's decrees, backed by the sign-manual of the King; and "Gabriel Honoré shall be carried this way, Sophie that"—though at this moment Sophie is about to become a mother. Mirabeau is taken to the prison of Vincennes, Sophie to a *maison de refuge.*

There (writes M. Rousse), some months later, Sophie de Monnier was confined of a daughter. Soon this child, whom she had scarcely seen, died far away from her; and with the child departed her last joy, her last source of pride in the world.

It had been conceded by the agent of the old Marquis—in face of the possibility of the suicide of Sophie de Monnier—that she should be allowed to correspond with Mirabeau. This correspondence, which was preserved by Lenoir, the Governor of Vincennes, was discovered in 1792, and was published to the world. It lifts the veil off things which had better remain hidden—has produced various impressions on various minds. The worst

thing that can be said of it is that it has become the favourite of prurient minds. If ever thou art tempted, young writer, to outrage the sanctities, remember that no loftiness of purpose will save you from the patronage of Holywell Street; think of that, and pause!

XIII

THE subsequent history of this historic love is unutterably sad—sadder for the woman than for the man; but for him sad too—perhaps more so than he ever was able to appreciate. When Mirabeau was released he was in no hurry to rush to Sophie's arms.

> At the end of some months (writes M. Rousse), at his own hour, at his own convenience, and after he had already entered on negotiations for a reconciliation with his wife, he went to see Mdme. de Monnier at Sien. Some nights of passion destroyed what had remained of the love that had disturbed his brain for four years—a love which, in spite of all his displays of tenderness, had probably not penetrated very deeply into his heart.

So far our realistic and prosaic Frenchman. Compare the fire, the poetry, the real pathos of Carlyle's lurid pen—

> After a space of years, these two lovers, wrenched asunder in Holland, and allowed to correspond that they might not poison themselves, met again: it was under cloud of night; in Sophie's apartment, in the country; Mirabeau, "disguised as a porter," had come thither from a considerable distance.

And they flew into each other's arms; to weep their child dead, their long unspeakable woes? Not at all. They stood, arms stretched oratorically, calling one another to account for causes of jealousy; grew always louder, arms set a-kimbo; and parted quite loud, never to meet more on earth.

From this time forward all is descent for Sophie—as it is indeed for most women who have staked much on a great love—and lost. She sought consolation in other adventures, and, finally, succeeded in finding an affection that promised real love and true tenderness. She had become at last free from that wretched old creature who had destroyed her life; and she was about to be married. But her ill-luck pursued her; and then she resolved to be done with it all. By September 1789, Mirabeau had left far behind him Sophie and *lettres de cachet*, hunger, obscurity, and proscription; and was well started in the blazing glory of the greatest man of France. On the night of the ninth of the same month in the same year, Sophie, tied by her own hands to a sofa—lest weakness should intervene at the last hour and stretch her still longer on the rack—was suffocating under the fumes of a pan of charcoal. What Mirabeau might have said in extenuation of his desertion of her, who knows? The observation is trite—I have made it myself already in this volume—that the only persons who know the real relations between a man and a woman are they themselves; and therefore no man or woman with any sense or experience ever

ventures to express a confident opinion of any story of love and separation. The terrible contrast between the fate of Mirabeau and Sophie de Monnier lies deeper than their own fate or characters, their virtues or faults; it lies in that attitude of the two sexes to each other which makes every such struggle between man and woman bound to end in such disastrous differences between the fate of the two. I pass from the strange and touching figure of this hapless and erring woman with the observation that she seems to have belonged to that race of woman which is foredoomed. Intense sensibility, a fierce greed for love, and a capacity for desperate resolves—it is a heritage which, when born with a woman, is almost certain to lead her to black destruction. And it is only the worshippers of mere Pharisaic cant who do not know that in such natures it is the good, quite as much as the evil, which leads to the disasters. Love and politics have this quality in common—generosity is their most destructive quality.

XIV

MEANTIME let us look at Mirabeau in Vincennes, through the inspired eyes of Carlyle—

> Conceive the giant Mirabeau locked fast, then, in Doubting-castle of Vincennes; his hot soul surging up, wildly breaking itself against cold obstruction; the voice of his despair

reverberated on him by dead stone walls. Fallen in the eyes of the world, the ambitious, haughty man ; his fair life-hopes from without all spoiled and become foul ashes : and from within—what he has done, what he has parted with and *un*done ! Deaf as Destiny is a Rhadamanthine father ; inaccessible even to the attempt at pleading. Heavy doors have slammed to, their bolts growling *Woe to thee !* Great Paris sends eastward its daily multitudinous hum ; in the evening sun thou seest its weathercocks glitter, its old grim towers and fuliginous life-breath all gilded: and thou ?—Neither evening nor morning, nor change of day nor season, brings deliverance. Forgotten of Earth ; not too hopefully remembered of Heaven ! No passionate *Pater-Peccavi* can move an old Marquis ; deaf he as Destiny. Thou must sit there.—For forty-two months, by the great Zodiacal Horologe ! The heir of the Riquettis, sinful, and yet more sinned against, has worn out his wardrobe ; complains that his clothes get looped and windowed, insufficient against the weather. His eye-sight is failing ; the family disorder, nephritis, afflicts him ; the doctors declare horse exercise essential to preserve life. Within the walls, then ! answers the old Marquis. Count de Mirabeau "rides in the garden of forty paces," with quick turns, hamperedly, overlooked by donjons and high stone barriers.

But Mirabeau was not idle. "In Holland," as M. Rousse puts it, "he wrote to live ; in Vincennes he wrote that he might not die." It is astonishing how much he managed to produce in this period. He translated Tibullus, Tacitus, Boccaccio, wrote an essay on *Elegies*, a classical tragedy, a light comedy, a history of Philip II., an essay on *Toleration*, a memorial on *Lettres de Cachet*—to say nothing of a number of works very much after the style of Voltaire in his worst mood. Even more remarkable than these are the memorials

which at frequent intervals he sends to his father in order to obtain his release—

Several are *chef d'œuvres* of reasoning (writes M. Rousse), and passion, and eloquence. I have heard the speeches of many advocates in my lifetime, and know few which would read so strong, so able, and so cutting, especially so emphatic, in spite of the over-emphasis, which is the main fault of all the writings of this time. They are the work of an incomparable advocate pleading a cause in which his life is at stake. They re-echo the cry of the flesh which suffers, of the intelligence which has been stifled, of a soul which, feeling that it is little by little becoming degraded and debased, rises up under the hand of the gaoler and bounds towards liberty.

In addition, there are, of course, the letters to Sophie; and these letters contain something more important than the mere exuberances of passion. There are constant outbursts of that vivid, restless, mobile mind.

In these disordered outbursts (says M. Rousse) of an intimacy which knew no reticence one can see all that Mirabeau then was, what he believed, what he felt, what he thought on everything—as to the affairs of this world and of the next.

XV

AND then M. Rousse gives us a glimpse into Mirabeau's spiritual faith, which we shall have reason to remember by and by—

What did he believe? Nothing. He is a thorough Materialist—without noise, without violence, without bravado. . . . The Church and the Chapel, the Talmud and the Koran,

all are one to him. "I shall never have a quarrel with anybody on a subject of such little importance. He who believes in nothing can submit to anything for the sake of quietness, as long as they ask nothing of him but mummeries, which do no harm or good to anybody." And elsewhere he says—"At the moment when we end, all our being ends with us."

It is characteristic of Mirabeau—of his versatility, his dramatic adaptiveness, and his want of scruple—that he who had written to Sophie that "all ends with us," should have composed a sermon on "The Immortality of the Soul" for a clergyman of scanty eloquence!

Finally, from these letters it is worth extracting a passage which gives his own estimate of himself, and which forecasts his future—

As for myself, I was born with the germ of military talent, some latent, much audacity, and an energetic soul. With all that one finds one's place. I was told not very long ago that I was born to play a part. Yes; I was born for that, and undoubtedly I know that better a great deal than those who know of me only the rough surface of a fiery young man who to-day is rearing against misfortune. But they did not want me when I wanted them. Well, then, let them go to the devil! I say to them all, they do not know the heart they are tearing to pieces in the man they despised, and that they will never know his value.

At the end of forty-two months his release came. His lengthened imprisonment undoubtedly helped to bring about his early death, and yet there are plenty who maintain that it was the one chance of his safety from even earlier and more disastrous destruction.

XVI

THE reasons which produced Mirabeau's release were not his eloquent pleadings or pathetic appeals. The race of Mirabeau was threatened with extinction, and the old Marquis wanted a grandson. Mirabeau undertook to obtain a ready pardon from his wife, but he counted without that lady. She had been separated from him for nine years, had enjoyed herself in the interval, and had no desire whatsoever for a renewal of the relationship. To his unutterable astonishment, Mirabeau found that he had to fight for his wife. Instead of being moved by his entreaties and his threats, she calmly demanded a judicial separation.

Little though he knew it, this unexpected action on the part of his wife was to lay the foundation of Mirabeau's political fortunes. He resolved to fight the case himself. He had had within him all his life an internal fire that urged him on to public action and to public speech—the fire of qualities which he knew so well lay within him, and which he had so long and so vainly sought to bring out before the world. Instead of performing on the grand stage before an admiring world, all he had done hitherto was mere wildness and disgrace and squalid adventure. But here at last

he had a stage and a play and an audience. It is characteristic of the man that he does not heed the fact that he has to face a very cyclone of attack and of denunciations, of which the fiercest came from letters written by his terrible father in the days when they were at war—that father who had described him "as a finished ruffian who ought to be removed even from the memory of mankind." In fact, the whole case is so terrible—both on the one side and on the other—that it was only Mirabeau who could have entered into and even joyed in it.

If one (writes M. Rousse) would know in a single case all the ignominious things which can be revealed to the public when the story is told of a couple at war with each other, and of a divided family, he need only read the reports of this case. It is one of those domestic dramas which usually forecast the end of a reign, and make people even expect the end of the world.

It is also characteristic of Mirabeau's methods that he borrows from all quarters, and in one speech he has the truly sublime audacity to interpolate in the midst of this odious and squalid family quarrel a slightly-altered passage from Bossuet's sermon on a nun's taking the veil!

Mirabeau lost his case. How could any court ask a woman to live with a man on whom his own father had pronounced such judgments? But he gained a reputation for oratory, and for the first time thoroughly knew and enjoyed his own powers of speech and influence over multitudes.

The sound of him (quoth Carlyle) is spread over France and over the world; English travellers, high foreign lordships, turning aside to Aix; and "multitudes gathered even on the roofs" to hear him, the court-house being crammed to bursting! Demosthenic fire and pathos; penitent husband calling for forgiveness and restitution—"*ce n'est qu'un claquedents et un fol*," rays forth the old Marquis from the chimney-nook; "a mere clatter-teeth and madman!"

XVII

MIRABEAU has not yet—will not for many years—discover his final halting-ground. The defeat of his attempt to get back his wife severs his connection with the class to which he had been born, and at the same time has first given him a taste of that popularity for which he longs. He has formed a new connection, this time with a Mdme. Nehra, a woman who seems to have a more beneficent influence than any who has yet touched him. With her he passes into England, and for a while mingles with the Whig leaders, visits the House of Commons, and, among others, is the close friend of the virtuous and excellent Romilly. It is noteworthy that Romilly forms a high opinion of him, thinks he is a sincere patriot, and, above all things, believes that these stories of his private immorality are grossly exaggerated. Next we find him in Paris writing pamphlets on all kinds of subjects. Then after a while he obtains a sort of informal mission to Germany, makes the acquaintance of

Frederick the Great, and publishes an able work, partly stolen, on German institutions. It is a time of intense activity, of wanderings, of innumerable publications, and above all, of constant want.

Much of all this work is merest drudgery, the veriest hack-work, but it will all tell by and by. It makes him acquainted with all the subjects of political interest to which the public mind is attracted in the seething period just before the States-General; it gives him extraordinary readiness—for often he writes a treatise in a week, a pamphlet in a night. Above all, it helps to keep him constantly before the public eye.

This is the dream which always besets him now —the dream of playing a great public part. He is always ready to take advantage of every means that can help him forward in this ambition, as though he belonged to our own day of universal publicity and ubiquitous newspapers. "He cannot let his name rest unmentioned for even one week," growls the old Marquis.

And so, Mirabeau prepares for the last great epoch of his life.

XVIII

ONCE again in his lifetime Mirabeau is confronted by a check, which ultimately is to his advantage. He tries to obtain admission to the States-General as a member of the nobility. But Mirabeaus'

democratic sentiments, his noisy and restless talent —above all, his evil record—closed the doors of his class against him.

At once he turns to that meridional region of France, to which he belongs as much by disposition as by talent. He seeks a seat in Marseilles and Aix at the same time, and at once he is caught in a whirlwind of popular favour. For the populace, as says M. Rousse, are captivated by

this nobleman, who assumes plebeian manners with such a grand air; this Provençal, who is so like Provence; who swears with the porters, talk *patois* with the farmer, and can plead, at the same time, in classic French better than the Crown Solicitor.

And his eloquence is just of the kind which suits them. He addresses the shivering and superannuated nobility as though they were the criminal and virile aristocrats of Rome—

In all countries, and in all ages (he cries out) aristocrats have implacably persecuted the friends of the people. . . . Thus perished the last of the Gracchi by the hands of the aristocrats. But, when struck by his death-blow, he threw his ashes to Heaven, calling upon the avenging gods, and from those ashes sprang Marius—Marius less illustrious from exterminating the Cimbrians than from having put down the power of the aristocracy in Rome.

This was the kind of thing to enrapture the crowd beginning to dream of an auroral dawn of liberty; and thus when Mirabeau was elected, it was in the midst "of a delirious joy, of wild popular outbursts, of general illuminations, of

cavalcades, ovations, dances, and riots." And so our declassed aristocrat is transformed into a tribune of the people.

And now, at last, our poor Mirabeau has "arrived." All the mud, the sufferings, the terrible buffetings of fate, have been left behind; all the mad, blind strivings of all those years have at last found their end. Who can help sympathizing with Carlyle's peal of sympathetic joy?—he also had his dreary pilgrimage over sharp-flinted heights before he reached the top of the hill—as he celebrates this tardy victory—

> At last! Does not the benevolent reader, though never so unambitious, sympathize a little with this poorer brother mortal in such a case? Victory is always joyful; but to think of such a man, in the hour when, after twelve Hercules' labours, he does finally triumph! So long he fought with the many-headed coil of Lernean serpents; and, panting, wrestled and wrang with it for life or death—forty long, stern years; and now he has it under his heel! The mountain-tops are scaled; where the man climbed, on sharp flinty precipices, slippery, abysmal; in darkness, seen by no kind eye—amid the blood of dragons; and the heart, many times, was like to fail within him, in his loneliness, in his extreme need: yet he climbed, and climbed, glueing his footsteps in his blood; and now, behold, Hyperion-like he has scaled it, and on the summit shakes his glittering shafts of war! What a scene and new kingdom for him; all bathed in auroral radiance of Hope; far-stretching, solemn, joyful. What wild Memnon's music, from the depths of Nature, comes toning through the soul raised suddenly out of strangling death into victory and life! The very bystander, we think, might weep, with this Mirabeau, tears of joy.

XIX

THE States-General opened their momentous history on the morning of May 4, 1789, when all of the three orders of which they were composed walked in procession to the great church of St. Louis at Versailles, where they were to hear Mass and listen to a sermon from the Bishop of Nancy. The procession was watched from a window by the woman whom we know as Mdme. de Staël; and who that day must have been especially happy, for it was a day of triumph for Necker, her father —the Minister to whom, at that moment, all the oppressed and starving people of France looked for reform, relief—for liberty and for bread; and thus she describes Mirabeau's outward seeming at this tremendous moment—

> Among these nobles who had been deputed to the Third Estate, above all others, the Comte de Mirabeau. The opinion men had of his genius was singularly augmented by the fear entertained of his immorality; and yet it was this very immorality which straitened the influence his astonishing faculties were to secure him. You could not but look long at this man, when once you had noticed him; his immense black head of hair distinguished him among them all; you would have said his force depended on it, like that of Samson; his face borrowed new expression from its very ugliness; his whole person gave you the idea of an irregular power, but a power such as you would figure in a Tribune of the People.

This is the language of dislike and distrust; but it is no more than an echo of the universal

feeling towards Mirabeau at this moment. It is a heritage of all those wild and disorderly scenes through which we have followed him, that in the Assembly he is at first placed in Coventry. On this morning of May 4, none of his fellow-deputies cared to be seen in his company; and it is recorded that when his name was first read out in the lists, there was a burst of hisses—so widespread and so profound was the belief in his utter want of decency and principle. At every point his bad past was rising up in judgment against him. Wherever he turned it stood as a dead, dark, unscalable wall before him. It is no wonder that he often shed bitter tears—as his secretaries, to whom he revealed the nudity of his soul, record—when he spoke of these follies of his youth as so destructive both to France and to him.

And assuredly it is calculated to intensify one's idea of his energy, courage, tenacity, and native goodness of heart that he fought against all this with good-humour, and even with dignity; and it likewise helps us to form an idea of the commanding power of the man, that he was able, amid all those keen, brilliant, and ardent intellects, to establish his supremacy in so short a time.

XX

In addition to his natural talents, Mirabeau had come to this Assembly with a far better preparation than any of his colleagues. All these years of Grub Street drudgery, of incessant labour in prisons, of pamphlets and books between his release from Vincennes and the opening of the States-General—all these years had been devoted to the discussion of the very questions which the States-General—had now to confront, so that, as M. Rousse says—"Mirabeau had thought out everything he was going to say, had written all he was going to speak, had announced everything he was going to do." One day he is charged with inconsistency in the Assembly; he replies that "thirty volumes" were the proof of the inflexible consistency of his opinions—to such gigantic proportions had the productions of his pen reached.

Moreover, he is a born orator, and especially for such an Assembly as this. It has been seen that while he was still a child he loved to appear on the stage, and that when he was a boy at school he calmly pronounces a discourse before distinguished visitors; that he rushes to the law-courts, and does not shrink before the most loathsome details of a domestic tragedy, because he gets the opportunity of airing his eloquence. And though he has, perforce, been a writer all these years, he writes

like an orator. "Even his most private letters," says M. Rousse, "are speeches."

The words seem to fall from his pen as if they fell from his lips; an invisible gesture accompanies them. He has before him an audience, an adversary whom he combats, or a friend who applauds him. . . . He enlivens everything—he makes everything live under his pen, everything has movement, natural and vivid rhetoric. He creates personages and makes them appear on the scene. In order to describe the most private events of his life he invents dialogues in which truth and fable are mingled . . . he composes pleadings for Mdme. de Monnier against her husband—speeches, replies, exordiums, perorations, everything is there. At Manosque or Marseilles, in the old house at Amsterdam, or in the keep at Vincennes, his desk is a tribune over which he bends—the bar of a court on which he leans. Like an actor rehearsing his part, he walks with slow steps up and down his room: stopping now and then, sitting down, rising again, again stopping to write. If a word pleases him he repeats it, listens to it, prolongs its echo. If he has a mirror before him he looks at himself in it without laughing, for he does not know this fear of himself or of others which embarrasses timid people. Like the people of his region, he has no knowledge of what is meant by exaggeration, no sense of the ridiculous. It has never occurred to him that his letter to the lover of his wife could appear ridiculous to anybody, or that when he assaulted a man with a parasol in the public highway he would be a subject of laughter to everybody. Everything that concerns him assumes an air of importance and magnificence. Thus he cannot help revealing himself, giving everything which is in his head or his heart.

Finally, he has all the physical attributes which make the orator. He has a voice, strong, clear, and persuasive; and his gestures are ready. Even his physical defects are advantageous. Those large and somewhat deformed features are striking when

seen in the tribune and from a distance. Just as a certain type of pretty woman looks ugly on the stage, and a certain type of ugly woman looks beautiful, Mirabeau has the kind of features which are splendid and impressive in the tribune of a huge hall and a vast assembly.

XXI

AND our poor Mirabeau has resolved, above all things, that he *will* succeed. On the very first day when the States-General meet, he has prepared a speech, but he is dodged out of the opportunity of delivering it. His friends had prepared for the same day a triumphant entry; but in face of those hisses, those shrinking figures all around, they have to keep a shamed silence. But Mirabeau is not at the end of his resources. Now, as often before in the course of his desperate struggles with fortune, he brings his pen to the aid of his tongue. There were few journals in those days, and they were not good. Mirabeau produced a periodical which professed to give an account of the proceedings of the States-General, and which was mainly occupied with full reports of his own speeches, of his motives, of his votes, and with encomiums upon his proceedings. "Deputy, doubling the part of journalist—thus he had anticipated by one hundred years one of the most dangerous movements of politics," says

M. Rousse. And now the Court came to Mirabeau's aid. An edict was published for the suppression of his journal; the edict was evaded, amid the tumultuous applause of all the opponents of the Court. This was Mirabeau's first success. The Deputies who had avoided him now began to court him; already he had begun to be looked upon as one of the heads of the new Assembly.

On June 23 an even greater opportunity presented itself; and Mirabeau's extraordinary readiness—his wit, audacity, and resolve to place himself in front—gave him the power to take advantage of the opportunity. A few words are necessary to explain the scene. When the States-General met, they consisted, as everybody knows, of three Orders—the Nobility, the Clergy, and the Third Estate—representatives of the *bourgeoisie*. At once a question of tremendous moment arose. Would the States-General vote by Orders or by head? It was a question which had been debated for many a long day before the States-General had assembled; it was discussed among ten thousand other subjects by Mirabeau's old father. Underneath that question, as will be at once seen, lay the issue whether France was or was not to have a truly representative government, for if the vote were to be taken by Orders, then the Third Estate—who alone were in any sense representative of the people—would be powerless; they would be but one Order out of three; and in the other two Orders

reaction, of course, would have a permanent majority. The battle was fought out for months, after a curious, complicated fashion. The Third Estate met in one hall, the other Orders in others. There were messages, phantasmal meetings which refused to do any business—a thousand and one battles apparently over the merest forms—with this substratum underneath it all, that the Third Estate obstinately refused to recognize the separate existence of the other Orders.

XXII

In this struggle the King adopted that irresolute and ever-changing attitude which was the despair of everybody around him, including his wife, and which ultimately led him and her to the guillotine. The contest after a while developed into the small question of finding a place wherein the Third Estate could meet. On the morning of June 20 it is announced that the King is going to hold a meeting on the 23rd, in the Salle des Menus Plaisirs—the hall in which the Third Order had been in the habit of meeting; and any meeting of the Third Estate is forbidden until that day. Accordingly, when the Third Estate comes on the morning of the 20th to its hall, it finds it closed, occupied by a section of Royal body-guards, and by carpenters who are preparing the platform on

which the King is to sit at the meeting he is going to hold. This outrage on the Deputies provoked an outburst of feeling, and led to the first and greatest deed in the march towards revolution. After much wild discussion and many frantic councils, Dr. Guillotine remembered that there was a tennis-court in the Rue St. François in Versailles, and "thither," as Carlyle puts it, "in long-drawn files, hoarse jingling, like cranes on wing, the Commons Deputies angrily wend."

Strange sight was this in the Rue St. François, Vieux Versailles—goes on Carlyle. A naked Tennis-Court, as the pictures of that time still give it: four walls, naked, except aloft some poor wooden penthouse, or roofed spectators' gallery, hanging round them—on the floor, not now an idle teeheeing, a snapping of balls and rackets; but the bellowing din of an indignant National Representation, scandalously exiled hither! However, a cloud of witnesses looks down on them, from wooden penthouse, from wall-top, from adjoining roof, and chimney; rolls towards them from all quarters, with passionate-spoken blessings. Some table can be procured to write on; some chair, if not to sit on, then to stand on. The Secretaries undo their tapes; Bailly has constituted the Assembly.

Experienced Monnier, not wholly new to such things in Parliamentary revolts which he has seen or heard of, thinks that it were well, in these lamentable threatening circumstances, to unite themselves by an Oath—universal acclamation, as from smouldering bosoms getting vent. The oath is re-enacted, pronounced aloud by President Bailly—and, indeed, in such a sonorous tone, that the cloud of witnesses, even outdoors, hear it, and bellow response to it. Six hundred right hands rise with President Bailly's to take God above to witness that they will not separate for man below, but will meet in all places, under all circumstances, wheresoever two or three can get together, till they have made the

Constitution. Make the Constitution, friends! That is a long task. Six hundred hands, meanwhile, will sign as they have sworn; six hundred save *one;* one Loyalist Abdiel, still visible by this sole light-point, and nameable, poor "M. Martin d'Auch, from Castelnaudary, in Languedoc." At four o'clock the signatures are all appended, new meeting is fixed for Monday morning earlier than the hour of the Royal Session.

XXIII

MONDAY, June 23, for which the Royal sitting had been fixed, came at last, and by this time the Third Estate had been strengthened by the accession of one hundred and forty-nine members of the Order of the Clergy—some bishops among the number—who resolved to throw in their lot with them. The temper of the Third Estate had also been roused by the fact that it had been kept waiting in a bitter rain, while the nobility and the friends of the Court had been allowed to enter early and by privileged ways. And then the poor King announces that he has taken up sides against the Third Estate, and that the Three Orders *shall* vote separately. And then, the King, the Order of the Nobility, the majority of the Order of the Clergy "file out, as if the whole matter were satisfactorily completed." And now came Mirabeau's great opportunity—I borrow from Carlyle again.

These file out through grim-silent seas of people. Only the Commons Deputies file not out, but stand there in gloomy

silence, uncertain what they shall do. One man of them is certain; one man of them discerns and dares! It is now that King Mirabeau starts to the Tribune, and lifts up his lion voice. Verily a word in season: for, in such scenes, the moment is the mother of ages! Had not Gabriel Honoré been there—one can well fancy how the Commons Deputies, affrighted at the perils which now yawned dim all round them, and waxing even paler in each other's paleness, might very naturally, one after one, have glided off, and the whole course of European history have been different!

But he is there. List to the brool of that royal forest voice; sorrowful, low, fast swelling to a roar! Eyes kindle at the glance of his eye. National deputies were missioned by a Nation; they have sworn an oath; they—but lo! while the lion's voice roars loudest what apparition is this? Apparition of Mercurius de Brézé, muttering somewhat!—"Speak out," cry several.—"Messieurs," shrills De Brézé, repeating himself, "you have heard the King's orders!"—Mirabeau glares on him with fire-flashing face; shakes the black lion's mane. "Yes, monsieur, we have heard what the King was advised to say; and you, who cannot be the interpreter of his orders to the States-General—you who have neither place nor right of speech here—you are not the man to remind us of it. Go, monsieur, tell those who sent you that we are here by the will of the People, and that nothing but the force of bayonets shall send us hence!" And poor De Brézé shivers forth from the National Assembly; and also (if it be not in one faintest glimmer, months later) finally from the page of history.

XXIV

FROM this time forward Mirabeau is to be regarded as the leader of the National Assembly. This position was due to his genuine talent. "Where one wants a speaker only," said Lamarck

—of whom more by and by—"there is plenty of talent in this Assembly; but where you want some thought, then you are without a rival." On every occasion when the Assembly is in a difficulty he knows by instinct—without the necessity even of reflection—what is the right thing to do. And there is also in him what so few of the other members of the Assembly had, a rational and indestructible love of free institutions with a hatred of anarchy, and a very clear idea of what should be the limits of parliamentary and executive powers.

It is perhaps a daring thing to say it, but I believe that some of Mirabeau's freedom from the violent and sanguinary illusions of his colleagues, was due to those very mistakes of his life which weigh so heavily on his memory, and which even then stood so much between him and his public usefulness. In all that career of mad and varied passions he had learned to probe human nature to its depths; and he was incapable of that dream of Paradises—a new world and angelic beings—which first led to the wild and mad travesties of the Revolution, and then to its wholesale massacres. The satiety of his senses was an illuminant to his brain and judgment.

And Mirabeau sees clearly what is coming—he, perhaps, almost alone of all the members of that Assembly. He is a statesman above all things; he believes in the maintenance of the monarchy; he has a profound, and, as it turned out, a just

contempt for the political abilities of that Assembly; and, in short, he sees that the one thing to save the monarchy and the country is a strong Ministry. Here, again, as throughout his whole career, he is baffled in his highest and wisest purposes by the meanest obstacles. Necker is incompetent. Solid, respectable, in face of this revolution which is beating against the walls of the Palace and all the old landmarks, he is about as effective as the smallest bank clerk to control a financial crash. This is the opinion which Mirabeau honestly holds of Necker, an opinion which subsequent events and the judgment of posterity have confirmed; but, nevertheless, Mirabeau does not allow personal predilections to stand between him and his political duty, and he accepts the proposal to meet Necker. But Necker is not equal to the situation; he receives Mirabeau as if he were a hard-driven trader entering a bank parlour. "What proposal have you to make to me?" asks Necker." "To bid you good-day," replies Mirabeau, justly furious: and he leaves him there.

XXV

SIMILARLY Mirabeau tries his hand on Lafayette. Lafayette by this time had reached a position of practical omnipotence. The National Guard had been brought into existence; it was

the real armed force that governed Paris, and Lafayette was its commander-in-chief, its idol, and its dictator. Mirabeau sought to make a combination by which both he and Lafayette should take charge of the government of the country, and save the King's crown and the country's peace. But Lafayette was a self-conceited and a selfish prig; he cared more for himself than for the country; and then he raised a high-sniffing nose from the heights of his saintly respectability on our poor bespattered, licentious, and bankrupt Mirabeau.

Thus from one side to another Mirabeau turns in the hope of finding a stable government somewhere. He even consents to exclude himself from the combination; and suggests list after list of names, taken from the men who can be most useful to the King and are most formidable against him. Again and again he tries to rouse the indolent and chattering courtiers to the realities of the situation. As early as September 1789, he cries out in a conversation he has with a friend of the Queen and the Court—"What are these people thinking of? Can they not see the abysses which are opening under their feet?" "On another occasion," says one of his biographers, "driven to an unusual state of exasperation, he cried out, 'All is lost; the King and the Queen will perish amid all this, and the mob will kick their corpses.'" "He observed," says Lamarck—who is telling the

story—"the horror which this phrase caused me. 'Yes, yes,' he repeated, 'they will kick their corpses. You do not fully understand the dangers of the situation; you must let them fully see it.'"

But all these warnings are apparently in vain; until at last Lamarck interferes, and here we have introduced on the scene a personage who is to play an important part in the life of Mirabeau and in the terrible drama which is opening. But I interrupt the story to refer to a final and tragic re-appearance from Mirabeau's dead past.

XXVI

WE have seen how far by this September of 1789 Mirabeau had got on that giddy and dazzling career which had at last opened to him. On September 8 in that year M. de Poterat, the affianced of Sophie, died; on the night of the same day Sophie killed herself. Doctor Ysabeau, who attended her, and had been kind to her, had a brother-in-law in the Assembly—a clergyman named M. Vallet; and to him he wrote, asking him to break the news to Mirabeau. M. Vallet, as a member of the Order of the Clergy, probably hated Mirabeau most cordially on moral and political grounds; and he has taken the pains to give an account of this mission with the hope of inflicting a final stab at Mirabeau's reputation. This is what he says—

My brother gave me the details of this frightful event, and gave me the commission to prepare Mirabeau for it, imagining that there should be a sensitive soul in such a body. I, who knew him better, did not take such precautions. I went and told M. Villiers, who said to me—"What are you going to do?" "Nothing," I replied, "but hand him my brother-in-law's letter. I shall not even speak to him." I went and sat beside him. He knew me well, and hated me accordingly. He asked what I meant by coming to sit on that side of the Assembly. Without replying, I presented the letter I had just received from my brother-in-law. He took a long time to read it, and I watched him with the greatest attention. He got pale and upset now and again, but quickly recovered himself and continued the reading. Then he sighed, coughed, spat, and ended by a great show of firmness. He stood up abruptly, handed me back the letter, saluted me, and left the Assembly, where he was not seen again for two or three days."

But, as St. Beuve says, what is meant to wound, only heightens Mirabeau's character. As St. Beuve well puts it—

Must not one admire the manner in which this witness, blinded by party spirit, at the same moment in which he accuses M. Mirabeau of a lack of sensibility, shows us on the contrary how troubled and shaken he saw him under the blow which he dealt him so mercilessly? The evidence turns against himself.

And, finally, let us make an end of this episode by recalling one of the many signs of the tenderness and the strength of the passion that thus ended. Mirabeau in his letters to Sophie often talks of Gabriel Sophie—such was the name of his poor little daughter—the frail and short-lived offspring of their passion. There is infinite tenderness in one of these letters.

My Sophie (writes Mirabeau), you remember that your mother once wrote to me asking me to teach you orthography; I don't know how it happened that I neglected such a request. Probably there was something that I thought more important. Alas! We now have to leave by all these studies of that old time. Let us, then, return to orthography (to please your honourable mother); but I know of but one means of writing correctly, and that is to be conversant with the principles of one's native tongue.

And then, Mirabeau tells of a little treatise which he has compiled, and which, in twenty-five pages, tells all the essential rules of French grammar. They will teach Sophie how to spell. This picture of the giant teaching this poor ignorant little woman how to spell, pathetic as it is, is less touching than the allusions to the child which follow—

This memoir is more than sufficient to put you in the way of teaching your daughter the principles of the French language. Grammars do not give style, but if Gabriel-Sophie has a soul like you she will easily find a Gabriel. He and she will love one another as we do, and I guarantee that she will write well. It is for her that I have compiled this little work, which has cost me both time and trouble. It *is for her*, I repeat, as I console myself with the thought that you would hardly think of consulting a grammar about any word or phrase destined for me. Ah! could art or wit ever teach that which your heart knows how to say?

XXVII

THE Comte de Lamarck is one of the most interesting figures of the Revolution. Born in Belgium when the Netherlands were still under

Austrian rule, he had entered the service of France when he was seventeen, had become colonel by hereditary title of one of the foreign regiments; fought with distinction in the Indies; was brave, astute, a courtier, and a personal friend of Marie Antoinette. Like herself, an Austrian by allegiance; like herself, French by adoption; unlike some others of her friends—and notably the Comte de Fersen—with none of the pretensions of a lover, he was one of the few people she really trusted. The Count de Lamarck had been attracted to Mirabeau before the assembly of the States-General, had requested to be introduced to him, and finally met him at the house of Prince de Poix at Versailles, in 1788. There is a curious record of the impression which the great tribune made on the courtier—

On seeing Mirabeau enter . . . M. de Lamarck was much struck with his appearance. He had a tall, squarely-built, sturdy figure. His head, which in size was beyond the ordinary proportions, looked still larger on account of the enormous curled and powdered wig he wore. He had on a dress-coat, ornamented by remarkably large buttons of coloured stones, and the buckles of his shoes were of equal dimensions. Indeed, one might notice in all the details of his toilette a certain exaggeration of the prevailing fashions which the good taste of the courtiers would not allow them to be guilty of. Marks of small-pox made his features rather unsightly. His eyes had a hidden look, but yet were full of fire. When he wished to be extra polite and attentive, he became affected, and his introductory remarks were often pretentious, and even vulgar, compliments. To put it in a nutshell, he neither understood the etiquette nor the language of the society in which he moved, so that, although by birth quite the equal of those whom he visited, it was easily seen

by his manners that he lacked that ease of deportment which distinguishes the *habitué* of good society.

A little lower down in this same description the narrator still more strongly emphasizes the bad impression Mirabeau's exterior made, by remarking that when M. de Meilhan led the conversation to politics and the Administration, all that had struck them as "ridiculous" in the exterior of Mirabeau was forgotten instantly, and people could only think of the abundance and the sagacity of his ideas. But, as Sainte-Beuve properly remarks, the courtiers were not just critics of Mirabeau's exterior. To be observed sympathetically, he required the magnitude of the amphitheatre; and even his dress is defended by this astute critic—

Mirabeau avoided, much more by instinct even than by calculation, the fashions of the time—so small, finnikin, and scanty. As his father, who knew him, said of him, he had "the grand air and pomp of garb in an ill-dressed age." In the world of Versailles, he might at first sight appear to be devoid of the manners of the great world; but in Paris and in all places where the Court with its little rooms did not set the fashion, he seemed in his dress, in his gestures, and in his manners—even in his intimate surroundings, a *grand seigneur* of the olden time who dressed himself luxuriously and capriciously. He who judged men so keenly by their inner nature, knew at the same time that the greater number of them judge others by their exteriors and their environment. He knew that it was necessary for him to appear glittering in the eyes of the people.

XXVIII

LAMARCK and Mirabeau did not meet again until the Three Orders had united and had formed the National Assembly, and then it was Mirabeau who made the first approaches. He had already reached his place as one of the leaders of the popular party, but he took the opportunity of at once letting Lamarck know that though he was a lover of liberty, he had no desire for anarchy—in short, he indicated to him, as to others, that he desired an understanding with the Court in its interests as much as in his own. And from the first he warned Lamarck of the appalling realities of the dangers by which the Crown and the King and Queen were threatened. I have already quoted the frightful expression which shocked Lamarck—the expression that the day was coming when the mob of Paris would kick the corpses of the King and Queen. For months before his death Mirabeau kept repeating this terrible phrase—it was the refrain of his speech; the hideous burden of all his thoughts; and what came after his death proved that it was one of the abounding proofs of that power of forecast which amounted in him to almost a second sight.

Be it remembered that Mirabeau was perfectly consistent in his policy and in his ideas. Over and

over again he proclaimed to the National Assembly that he was a convinced and determined Monarchist. He defended the absolute veto of the King at a moment when all Paris was going mad over it, going the length of declaring that he would rather live in Constantinople than in France, if she had a king without such a veto. At the moment when Mirabeau was fighting, the group who gathered round Robespierre was still impotent; but it had all the promise of its future power; it had already unveiled its ferocity and its fanaticism, and already there had been ominous signs of that universal popularity which for a time it obtained over Paris. But Mirabeau refused to quail before it. One day, when he was defending his monarchical principles, it shouted aloud in its disgust at his moderation; whereupon he haughtily shouted out, "I command silence on these thirty voices." In short, Mirabeau showed that, if needs be, he was ready to pay with his life for his convictions; and most people think that if he had survived, his would certainly have been one of the heads that the knife of the guillotine would have severed.

XXIX

ALL these things have to be remembered when one comes to estimate the next transaction in which Mirabeau is engaged. He told the Court

plainly that he was ready to act in its interests; foretold the dangers with which it was surrounded in language that was startling—as will have been seen—to the ears of courtiers; but, here comes the part that has sorely perplexed his biographers—he had at the same time to say that in order to be effective he must be paid. He had immense debts; his creditors worried him; and it is recorded that sometimes our poor Titan had to pledge his fine clothes; and sometimes even wanted the price of his dinner. It will throw some light on the morality of the acts with which I am presently to deal, to point out that Mirabeau's indebtedness was partly due to the fact that the harpy, who published his paper, insisted on taking the greater part of the profits, and that Mirabeau could not be induced to attend to his own private affairs. On July 13, the day before the taking of the Bastille—that is to say, the day before that general break-up which he himself had so plainly foreseen—the grim old Marquis—the Friend of Man—had died. Mirabeau was his heir; and in spite of all that had taken place, the rent was worth 50,000 livres a year. Mirabeau was considered by himself to be hugely in debt; as a matter of fact, he owed about 200,000 livres—that is to say, about four years' rent of his property. It ought not to have required much financial genius to have made an arrangement by which such a heritage could have relieved Mirabeau from at least pressing necessities; but the splendid

fellow refused to leave his place in the National Assembly—where everything turned on his tongue, adroitness, and courage—and would pay no attention to his private affairs. In this respect Mirabeau is but a specimen—a common specimen—of public men; a specimen that ought to receive much more consideration, perhaps, at the hands of men, and especially of biographers, than it usually does. The public man who is really absorbed in the work of the nation is not only without the time, but is without the inclination, to look after his own affairs. The mind that is capable of the enthusiasms of humanity is often by its very essence incapable of the small and sordid personal cares of daily life. But assuredly such enthusiasms are the mark, not of a low, but of a lofty nature, and political society would be much better employed in raising its benefactors and enthusiasts above small wants than in complaining that the great services bestowed upon it by such minds had been given at the expense of the statesman's own comfort and own interests.

XXX

HOWEVER, I had better state the case for Mirabeau in the language of his latest French biographer: he seems to me to put it admirably and very fairly—

There is in France a man prodigiously superior to every other—the only one who holds within his grasp the salvation of the state—a man who is strong enough to clear away the ruins of the past, and to build an edifice on the new foundations. This unique and essential man must be left all his strength and all his liberty. Nothing must embarrass him in his progress, nor distract him from his work. His intelligence, his genius is all powerful; but it is necessary that they be employed in all their force, without any hindrance. He is the great political motor which will do the work if properly alimented. Let him have plenty of ease, plenty of material, so that, having everything in working order, he may be able to produce great results. This predestined saviour of the country and the throne is Mirabeau. If he were to ask fifty louis from the Count de Lamarck to-day, one thousand louis from the Count de Provence to-morrow, should he receive fifty thousand livres from Lafayette, and a little later on get a permanent salary from the King, it would not be through avarice, nor for his own pleasure; it would be for the good of his country and the service of the state, in order to be able to think, speak, and act with full liberty—himself to possess and give to an imperilled country all his strength; these are the only grounds on which he wants his debts to be paid. For the general interest it is necessary that this great pensioner of the state be relieved from all embarrassment. He must not be left always within hearing of his creditors' bells, nor with the threatening letters of his tradesmen continually before his eyes; "no subordinate embarrassment inconveniencing him—no fox devouring his entrails." . . . He does not want to be unreasonable nor avaricious, but neither does he want to be duped. This is not enough. As he is the only man who can save the kingdom, he must watch over all, know all, be everywhere at once; he must have his police whom he can trust, and his private messengers, and his twelve spies to give an account hour by hour of the movements of MM. Lameth, Barnave, Duport, d'Aiguillon, Menou, and Pethion. The two agents whom M. de Mirabeau was obliged to post in Provence were at this moment paid out of his own pocket. All this soon succeeded in crushing him: his private affairs are on the verge of ruin, because he has

doubled his secret expense to be perfectly at ease. It is only just that one should pay his agents, spies, and messengers.

And then it must be added that our poor Mirabeau had weaknesses which also made demands on his exchequer. One of the curious facts of the days, which immediately preceded the terrible and destructive volcano of revolution, is that never was the pursuit of pleasure more vehement, reckless, and wild. Here is a significant fact mentioned in Mr. Morse Stephen's book—

Gambling-houses sprang up all over Paris, and members of both sides of the Assembly—Mirabeau and Cazalès alike—might be seen losing every penny they possessed at the same table. All the other vices seemed to grow in magnitude. The theatres were more thronged than ever, and the more dissolute the plays the larger were the audiences.

But though Mirabeau might pursue pleasure madly, there is no doubt of the prodigious extent of his industry. Nobody has summed up this part of his life better than Carlyle. Saith he—

"If I had not lived with him," says Dumont, "I never should have known what a man can make of one day, what many things may be placed within the interval of twelve hours. A day for this man was more than a week or a month is for others; the mass of things he guided on together was prodigious; from the scheming to the executing not a moment lost." "Monsieur le Comte," said his secretary to him once, "what you require is impossible." "Impossible!" answered he, starting from his chair—"*Ne me dites jamais ce bête de mot*" (Never name to me that blockhead of a word).

XXXI

BUT more wonderful than even the extent of his labours was his patience in forming new combinations immediately after the old one had broken down. It has been seen already how he had failed with Necker; how he had failed with Lafayette; a ministerial combination with Sièyes and Talleyrand as his colleagues, had also failed. The National Assembly came athwart his great project of forming a constitutional Ministry out of the Assembly itself by passing the idiotic resolution that no member of the Assembly could take office. Against this senseless decree Mirabeau fought obstinately, heroically, finally throwing down in the Assembly the splendid defiance that the Deputy called Mirabeau should be alone excluded from power. More serious even than the jealousy and incompetence of the Chamber, than the priggishness of Necker, the mean jealousy of Lafayette, was the irresolution of the King, both from his own incapacity and from the conflicting currents of influence among the courts. Again and again, as poor Mirabeau sees the throne and its occupants being hurried to the Niagara, he calls out in anguish and in warning; begs for a firm and a consistent policy; begs for such a thorough understanding between him and the Court as would enable him to be its defender

and its shield. In vain! And at last he thinks of a supreme expedient. He demands an interview with the Queen. The historic interview between these two strange beings took place at Saint Cloud.

Mirabeau (I again go to Carlyle for the description) took his horse one evening, and rode westward, unattended, to see Friend Clarière in the country-house of his. Before getting to Clarière's, the much-amusing horseman struck aside to a back gate of the garden of Saint Cloud. Some Duke d'Aremberg, or the like, was there to introduce him; the Queen was not far; on a round gnoll (*rond point*), the highest of the garden of Saint Cloud, he beheld the Queen's face; spoke to her, alone, under the void canopy of Night. What an interview; fateful, secret for us, after all searching; like the colloquies of the gods! . . . And so, under the void Night, on the crown of that gnoll, she has spoken with Mirabeau; he has kissed loyally the queenly hand, and said with enthusiasm, "Madame, the Monarchy is saved."

Over and over again Mirabeau afterwards declared that the Queen was the person to whom he looked for the salvation of the throne. "She is a man for courage," he said more than once. The incompetence of the King; the bravery of the Queen; the popularity which the poor little Dauphin enjoyed—we now know how that ended—suggested to Mirabeau one of the thousand plans which rushed through his resourceful mind. Why should they not repeat in France the episode in the life of Marie Antoinette's mother, in which a throne had been saved by an appeal to a man's love for a Queen and tenderness for a child and mother?

XXXII

AND so Mirabeau plots and plans in a thousand different directions; making speeches in the Chamber, writing thousands of letters, having secret agents everywhere, getting that prodigious amount of work into a single day which astounded Dumont, keeping half-a-dozen other men at work to supply with fuel this mighty engine of expression, force, and stimulation. And, meantime, the poor Titan—like so many other men of great originality—has the petty annoyances which mean foes can inflict. By the Assembly generally he is hated for this terrible domination, this supreme mastery, which puts them so much to shame; and littleness has a tremendous power of making itself nasty to greatness. The presidency of the Assembly is held for only a fortnight; and Mirabeau, who is so palpably the greatest and therefore the first to be entitled to the place, sees no fewer than forty-two of his colleagues reach the eminence before he is allowed to get there. And even when the office is bestowed, it is probably in the hope of preventing him from using that splendid organ of his from the tribune; for the President has not the right to intervene in debate during his tenure of office. But no force can suppress or silence Mirabeau. The speeches he cannot make to the Assembly he makes to those deputations

that come to its bar almost every day; and these speeches, fine in diction and in sentiment, delivered sonorously and with dignity, do much to augment the impression of this potent personality.

And there is also a brief spell of happiness, even of enjoyment, for his debts have been paid by the Court; he has a regular allowance; he is able, after all the penury of his life, to breathe freely; after imprisonment, that terrible father, his miserable allowance of fifty pounds a year, his Grub Street life in Amsterdam—after all this, Mirabeau has money; and what does our poor devil do—with sea-green Robespierre, cold and fanatic St. Just—with the affrighted bishops and the reactionary *abbés*—with the raucous newsboys shouting out in the very doors of the Assembly a pamphlet accusing him of treason to the nation and to the patriot cause—what does our poor devil of a Mirabeau do in face of all this, but live luxuriously, entertain royally? Sometimes, after the fashion of that untamable Bohemianism of his, he gives a dinner to the National Guard, of which he was commandant, which costs £500, and likewise an entertainment where there are "the syrens of the Opera." The result of it all is that everybody knows that Mirabeau has raised the wind somehow; and as the Court is the only place where the wind can be raised, it is universally believed that Mirabeau has sold himself to the Court.

But spite of the dirty pamphlets, the looks of

Robespierre, the dreadful croakings of Marat, Mirabeau holds on his way, now defending the monarchy fearlessly, again catching hold of popularity by some splendid defence of the principles of freedom; ever intriguing, planning, speaking. And thus it is that Carlyle fills in the picture of Mirabeau at this moment—

Din of battles, wars more than civil, confusion from above and below, in such environment the eye of Prophecy sees Comte de Mirabeau, like some Cardinal de Retz, stormfully maintain himself; with head all-devising, heart all-daring, if not victorious, yet unvanquished while life is left him. The specialities and issues of it no eye of prophecy can guess at; it is clouds, we repeat, and tempestuous night; and in the middle of it, now visible, far-darting, now labouring in eclipse, is Mirabeau indomitably struggling to be Cloud-Compeller! One can say that, had Mirabeau lived, the history of France and of the world had been different. Further, that the man would have needed, as few men ever did, the whole compass of that same "Art of Daring, Art d'Oser," which he so prized, and likewise that he above all men living would have practised and manifested it. Had Mirabeau lived one other year!

XXXIII

"BUT Mirabeau could not live another year any more than he could live another thousand years." He has received plenty of warnings of the coming silence. When he sat in his place as President of the Assembly one day in January, he has to do so with "his neck wrapt in linen cloths, at the evening session; there was sick heat of the blood,

alternate darkening and flashing in the eyesight; he had to apply leeches, after the morning labour, and preside bandaged. 'At parting he embraced me,' says Dumont, 'with an emotion I had never seen in him. "I am dying, my friend; dying as by slow fire; we shall perhaps not meet again. When I am gone they will know what the value of me was. The miseries I have held back will burst from all sides on France."'" (Carlyle.)

On March 27, proceeding towards the Assembly, he had to seek rest and help in Friend de la Marck's by the road, and lay there for an hour, half-fainting, stretched on a sofa. To the Assembly nevertheless he went, as if in spite of Destiny itself; spoke loud and eager, five several times, then quitted the tribunal—for ever. He steps out, utterly exhausted, into the Tuileries Gardens; many people press round him, as usual, with applications, memorials. He says to the friend who was with him—"Take me out of this!"

It helps to make us understand how Mirabeau was loved to know that this last occasion on which he dragged himself to the tribune was brought about by his affection for Lamarck. There was a proposal that mines should become the property of the State; such a measure would have destroyed much of the fortune of his friend Lamarck; and Mirabeau had convinced himself that he could conscientiously oppose it in the interests of the nation as well as in those of his friend. When he returned from the Assembly at three o'clock on that day, he threw himself on the sofa and said to

his friend—"Your cause is won, but I have got my death-blow."

His illness brought forth a manifestation which is one of the defences of his memory. It has been seen how boldly he declared his principles as a monarchist; how fearless he was in opposition to the Extremists; how deeply he was suspected of being in the pay of that Court which everybody had by this time learnt to distrust, and which many were beginning to hate; and yet such was the mastery of the man that—

On the last day of March, 1791, endless anxious multitudes beset the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, incessantly inquiring; within doors there, in the house numbered in our time 42, the over-wearied giant has fallen down, to die. Crowds of all parties and kinds; of all ranks, from the King to the meanest man! The King sends publicly twice a day to inquire—privately besides; for the world at large there is no end of inquiring. "A written bulletin is handed out every three hours," is copied and circulated; in the end it is printed. The people spontaneously keep silence—no carriage shall enter with its noise; there is crowding pressure, but the sister of Mirabeau is reverently recognized, and has free way made for her. The people stand mute, heart-stricken; to all it seems as if a great calamity were nigh; as if the last man of France, who could have swayed these coming troubles, lay there at hand-grips with the unearthly Power. The silence of a whole people, the wakeful toil of Cabanis, friend and physician, skills not: on Saturday, the second day of April, Mirabeau feels that the last of the days has risen for him; and on this day he has to depart and be no more. (Carlyle.)

XXXIV

IN dying, as in living, Mirabeau was great. There are few death-beds every hour of which has been told so often, and which remains so ineffaceably graven on the imagination of mankind. His mind remains clear almost to the last; he feels all that is dying with him; and expresses it in that strange, self-confident, and Titanic language which somehow or other does not offend. "I carry in my heart," he said, "the death-dirge of the French monarchy; the dead remains of it will now be the spoils of faction." He hears the sound of cannon: "Have we," he cries, "the funeral of Achilles already?" A friend supports his head. "Yes," he cries, "support that head; would I could bequeath it to you!"

For three days there is low wide moan, weeping in the National Assembly itself. The streets are all mournful; orators mounted on the *bornes*, with large silent audience, preaching the funeral sermon of the dead. Let no coachman whip fast, distractively with his rolling wheels, or almost at all, through these groups! His traces may be cut; himself and his fare, as incurable aristocrats, hurled sulkily into the kennels. The bourne-stone orators speak as it is given them; the Sansculottic People, with its rude soul, listens eager, as men will to any sermon or *Sermo* when it *is* a spoken word meaning a thing, and not a babblement meaning nothing. In the Restaurateur's of the Palais Royal the waiter remarks—"Fine weather, Monsieur!" "Yes, my friend," answers the ancient Man of Letters, "very fine, but Mirabeau is dead." Hoarse rhythmic threnodies come also

from the throats of ballad-singers, are sold on grey-white paper at a sou each. But of portraits, engraved, painted, hewn, and written; of eulogies, reminiscences, biographies—nay, vaudevilles, dramas, and melodramas, in all provinces of France, there will, through these coming months, be the due immeasurable crop; thick as the leaves of spring. So speaks and cackles manifold, the Sorrow of France, wailing articulately, inarticulately, as it can, that a Sovereign Man is snatched away. In the National Assembly, when difficult questions are astir, all eyes will "turn mechanically to the place where Mirabeau sat"—and Mirabeau is absent now. (Carlyle.)

Mirabeau, meantime, meets death calmly. Lamarck, who was fond of expressing his admiration of what he called beautiful deaths, when he comes to see him is greeted with—"Well, my dear connoisseur in the art of dying, you are contented with me." "He drew up his will, left some legacies, but could not dispose of his property—for, after the fashion of this strange family of his, he and they were all in litigation one with the other; and gave directions as to the safe custody of the papers which were to be the vindication of his policy and his purposes. Towards the close, there were the two magnificent outbursts of that mingled Theism and Paganism which was the dominant creed of that generation that had been brought up in the gospel of Jean Jacques Rousseau. He saw the spring sun rising, and exclaimed—"If that be not God, it is His cousin-german." And to Cabanis, the great physician who attended him, he said—"My friend, I shall die to-day. When one has got

to that stage, the only thing left to do is to perfume oneself, to crown oneself with flowers, to surround oneself with music, and thus enter pleasantly into that deep sleep from which there comes no awakening." He was not permitted to enter "pleasantly" into his last sleep—

Death (writes Carlyle) has mastered the outworks, power of speech is gone, the citadel of the heart still holding out; the moribund giant, passionately, by sign, demands paper and pen, writes his passionate demand for opium to end these agonies. The sorrowful doctor shakes his head. "*Dormir*" (to sleep), writes the other, passionately pointing at it! So dies a gigantic Heathen and Titan; stumbling blindly, undismayed, down to his rest. At half-past eight in the morning Doctor Petit, standing at the foot of the bed, says—"*Il ne souffre plus.*" His suffering and his working are now ended.

WILLIAM HAZLITT AND SARAH WALKER[1]

I

BEFORE you read the charming, strange, saddening little volume, take down from your bookshelves the second volume of Mr. Leslie Stephen's *Hours in a Library*, and re-read the essay on William Hazlitt. In the course of some thirty pages, you will refresh your memory with all that, for the moment at least, you require to remember of the great critic. On one passage you will pause—it gives so vivid a picture of the man and the critic in space so short; and I quote it here, because it helps to the enjoyment and understanding of the book with which we shall be immediately concerned.

De Quincey refutes the saying of some admiring friend of Hazlitt, who confessed to a shudder whenever Hazlitt used his habitual gesture of placing his hand within his waistcoat.

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[1] *Liber Amoris, or the New Pygmalion*, by William Hazlitt. With an Introduction by Richard le Gallienne." London: Elkin Matthews and John Lane.

The hand might emerge armed with a dagger. Whenever, said the same friend (Heaven preserve us from our friends!), Hazlitt had been distracted for a moment from the general conversation he looked round with a mingled air of surprise and defiance, as though some objectionable phrase might have evaded his censure in the interval. The traits recur to us when we read Hazlitt's description of the men he had known. We seem to see the dark, sardonic man watching the faces and gestures of his friends, ready to take sudden offence at any affront to his cherished prejudices, and yet hampered by a kind of nervous timidity which makes him unpleasantly conscious of his own awkwardness. He remains silent till somebody unwittingly contradicts his unspoken thoughts—the most irritating kind of contradiction to some people—and perhaps heaps indiscriminate praise on an old friend, a term nearly synonymous with an old enemy. Then the dagger suddenly flashes out, and Hazlitt strikes two or three rapid blows, aimed with unerring accuracy at the weak points of the armour he knows so well. And then, as he strikes, a relenting comes over him; he remembers old days with a sudden gush of fondness, and puts on a touch of scorn for his allies or himself. Coleridge may deserve a blow, but the applause of Coleridge's enemies awakens his self-reproach. His invective turns into panegyric, and he warms for a time into hearty admiration, which proves that his irritation arises from an excess, not from a defect of sensibility; but finding that he has gone a little too far, he lets his praise slide into equivocal description, and, with some parting epigram, he relapses into silence. The portraits thus drawn are never wanting in piquancy nor in fidelity. Brooding over his injuries and his desertions, Hazlitt has pondered almost with the eagerness of a lover upon the qualities of his intimates. Suspicion, unjust it may be, has given keenness to his investigation. He has interpreted in his own fashion every mood and gesture. He has watched his friends as a courtier watches a royal favourite. He has stored in his memory, as we fancy, the good retorts which his shyness or unreadiness smothered at the propitious moment, and brings them out in the shape of a personal description. When such a man sits at our tables, silent and apparently self-absorbed, and yet

shrewd and sensitive, we may well be afraid of the dagger, though it may not be drawn till after our death, and may write memoirs instead of piercing flesh.

II

THE curious mixture of sourness and kindliness, which is here so vividly set forth, belonged to a period when the professional writer had a good deal more to try his nerves and spoil his temper than in our more civilized times. Hazlitt stood, in the beginning of this century, almost at the head, not only of the literary critics, but of the Liberal journalists of his time; and everybody who has read old numbers of the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood*, will know the style of controversy which raged in those ferocious days. Hazlitt could give as good as he got—though the splendour of his style gave to his most violent attack a dignity wanting in the mere malignity of the *Quarterly*, and the whisky-and-haggis frothings of *Blackwood*. Like so many another fierce combatant with the pen, he was a shy, timid, and morbidly, horribly sensitive creature.

My first meeting with Mr. Hazlitt (writes Barry Cornwall) took place at the house of Leigh Hunt, where I met him at supper. I expected to see a severe, defiant-looking being. I met a grave man, diffident, almost awkward in manner, whose appearance did not impress me with much respect. He had a quick, restless eye, however, which opened eagerly when any good or bright observation was made; and I found, at the conclusion of the evening, that when any question arose the most sensible reply came from him.

But shy, self-absorbed, diffident before others, he was at bottom proud, scornful, brimming over with every form of stirring and tumultuous passion. He himself spoke of himself as "the king of good haters"—which, indeed, he was not; for your real hater doth never unpack his heart with words; and our poor Hazlitt was constantly assailing some literary or political antipathy as a little blacker than Satan, and more destructive than sin. His strong personality can be read between every line that he wrote. It was his misfortune that he was cursed with a sensibility from which every stern combatant should be free. Thus *Blackwood*, in one of its attacks upon him, flung at him the brutality, "the pimpled Hazlitt"; and this is how one of his friends described the effect upon him of such an assault—

For instance, during the first week or fortnight after the appearance of—let us suppose—one of *Blackwood's* articles about him, if he entered a coffee-house where he was known, to get his dinner, it was impossible (he thought) that the waiters could be doing anything else all the time he was there, but pointing him out to guests as "the gentleman who was so abused last month in *Blackwood's Magazine*." If he knocked at the door of a friend, the look and reply of the servant (whatever they might be) made it evident to him that he had been reading *Blackwood's Magazine* before the family were up in the morning! If he had occasion to call at any of the publishers for whom he might be writing at the time, the case was still worse, inasmuch as there his bread was at stake, as well as that personal civility which he valued no less. Mr. Colburn would be "not within," as a matter of course; for his clerks to even ascertain his pleasure on

that point beforehand would be wholly superfluous: had they not all chuckled over the article at their tea the evening before? Even the instinct of the shop-boys would catch the cue from the significant looks of those above them, and refuse to take his name to Mr. Ollier. They would "believe he was gone to dinner." He could not, they thought, want to have anything to say to a person who, as it were, went about with a sheet of *Blackwood* pinned to his coat-tail like a dish-cloth.

And when he went home to his poor lodgings he was equally afflicted.

If the servant who waited upon him did not answer his bell the first time—ah! 'twas clear, she had read *Blackwood's*, or heard talk of it at the bar of the public-house where she went for the beer! Did the landlady send up her bill a day earlier than usual, or ask for payment of it less civilly than was her custom, how could he wonder at it? It was *Blackwood's* doing. . . . Even the strangers that he met in the streets seemed to look at him askance, "with jealous leer malignant," as if they knew him by intuition for a man on whom was set the double seal of public and private infamy—the doomed and denounced of *Blackwood's Magazine*.

III

THIS man—the fierce yet sensitive controversialist, in some respects the truest and best critic of his time, the lover of fine books, beautiful pictures, all the graces and arts of life—was destined to be the hero of one of the most curious, squalid, and yet touching love stories that have ever been told. I have put his intellectual achievements and his personal adventure in contrast,

though they are not really so much in contradiction, for a sensuous and passionate temperament is as much at the root of the one as of the other. There is one other point in Hazlitt's life which, when brought out, will explain his nature and this episode.

Patmore, giving an account of his curious daily habits, tells us how, rising at one or two, he would sit over his breakfast of black tea and toast (his slavery to black tea had, doubtless, much to do with his misanthropy) "silent, motionless, and self-absorbed" till the evening, oppressed by a *vis inertiæ* which he was incapable of resisting, unless at the prospect of absolute destitution (for he never wrote till necessity actually forced it upon him), or "moved to do so by some inducement in which *female* attraction had a chief share."

Hazlitt had all his life been in love with some woman or another, and finally, after many mischances in love, had been unhappily married. His wife seems to have grown as dissatisfied with him as he with her. They both went to Scotland, and by mutual agreement made a case for divorce in that country of strange matrimonial laws. I have not time to dwell on the character of the wife, further than to say that she has drawn her own picture in a diary, still extant, and that she seems to have been a woman of much practical sense, with a high idea of the value of money, and with a frigid temperament. It was just before this final separation, and in the midst of the legal proceedings, that Hazlitt was involved in his strange tragi-comedy.

It was on August 16, 1820, that Hazlitt "first saw the sweet apparition." The "sweet apparition" was Sarah Walker, daughter of a Mr. Walker, tailor and lodging-house keeper at No. 9, Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, where Hazlitt had his humble and solitary lodgings. Sarah Walker will be shown to have been one of the poorest divinities that ever love and imagination created; but I think that the critics have been too hard on her, and have underrated her attractions —physical and mental. Presently I shall give Hazlitt's estimate of her; but, for the moment, let me quote, not his enraptured generalities, but a detailed description by one whose eye was not only not dimmed by love, but who was strongly prejudiced against her. Thus writes Barry Cornwall of her—

> I used to see this girl, Sarah Walker, at his lodgings, and could not account for the extravagant passion of her admirer. She was the daughter of the lodging-house keeper. Her face was round and small, and her eyes were motionless, glassy, and without any speculation (apparently) in them. Her movements in walking were very remarkable, for I never observed her to make a step. She went onwards in a sort of wavy, sinuous manner, like the movements of a snake. She was silent, or uttered monosyllables only, and was very demure. Her steady, unmoving gaze upon the person whom she was addressing was exceedingly unpleasant. The Germans would have extracted a romance from her, enduing her perhaps with some diabolic attribute.

De Quincey, says Mr. Le Gallienne in his introduction, adds another touch to her portrait—

Hazlitt had confessed, he said, in conversation that one characteristic of her complexion made somewhat against her charm, "that she had a look of being somewhat jaded, as if she were unwell, or the freshness of the animal sensibilities gone by." May not this have been the passion-pallor, so much in evidence in æsthetic poetry—another mark of a strongly sexual nature?

IV

WHEN the whole story was nearly over, Hazlitt sate him down and wrote an account of it, and then, much to the scandal of his friends, and to the delight of the *Blackwood* enemy, published it all in a book. This was the origin of the *Liber Amoris, or the New Pygmalion.* It is a most curious book, and I place it on a higher literary level than Mr. Le Gallienne is disposed to do. To him it is "a document of nympholepsy"—a hateful word, which I wish Mr. Le Gallienne had spared us—"a biographical appendix," "necessary to the understanding of Hazlitt's curious disposition"—in short, interesting solely as a picture of Hazlitt. I think, on the contrary, the really important thing in it is the portrait of the second person in the episode; for that is a picture of a certain and not unfrequent type of woman—the sluttish coquette—half *bourgeoise*, half servant-maid—cunning, adroit, intriguing, wanton, which is one of the finest, most truthful, most vivid portraits in literature. However, on this point the

reader will have the same opportunity of pronouncing as Mr. Le Gallienne or myself, for the plan I shall adopt is that of telling the story by extracts from the book.

Liber Amoris is divided into three books—mostly made up of a report of dialogues between Hazlitt and Sarah Walker—veiled under a very thin disguise. Thus the first chapter, entitled "The Picture," opens—

H. Oh! is it you? I had something to show you—I have got a picture here. Do you know any one it's like? *S.* No, sir.—*H.* Don't you think it's like yourself? *S.* No; it's much handsomer than I can pretend to be.—*H.* That's because you don't see yourself with the same eyes that others do. *I* don't think it handsomer, and the expression is hardly so fine as yours sometimes is. *S.* Now you flatter me. Besides, the complexion is fair, and mine is dark.—*H.* Thine is pale and beautiful, my love, not dark! But if your colour were a little heightened, and you wore the same dress, and your hair were let down over your shoulders, as it is here, it might be taken for a picture of you. Look here, only see how like it is. The forehead is like, with that little obstinate protrusion in the middle; the eyebrows are like, and the eyes are just like yours, when you look up and say, "No—never!" *S.* What, then, do I always say "No—never!" when I look up?—*H.* I don't know about that—I never heard you say so but once; but that was once too often for my peace. It was when you told me "you could never be mine." Ah! if you are never to be mine I shall not long be myself. I cannot go on as I am. My faculties leave me; I think of nothing, I have no feeling about anything but thee; thy sweet image has taken possession of me, haunts me, and will drive me to distraction. Yet I could almost wish to go mad for thy sake, for then I might fancy that I had thy love in return, which I cannot live without! *S.* Do not, I beg, talk in that manner, but tell me what this is a picture

of.—*H.* I hardly know; but it is a very small and delicate copy (painted in oil on a gold ground) of some fine old Italian picture, Guido's or Raphael's, but I think Raphael's. Some say it is a Madonna; others call it a Magdalen, and say you may distinguish the tear upon the cheek, though no tear is there. But it seems to me more like Raphael's St. Cecilia, "with looks commercing with the skies," than anything else. See, Sarah, how beautiful it is! Ah! dear girl, these are the ideas I have cherished in my heart, and in my brain; and I have never found anything to realize them on earth till I met with thee, my love! While thou didst seem sensible of my kindness, I was but too happy; but now thou hast cruelly cast me off. *S.* You have no reason to say so; you are the same to me as ever.—*H.* That is, nothing. You are to me everything, and I am nothing to you. Is it not too true? *S.* No.—*H.* Then kiss me, my sweetest. Oh! could you see your face now—your mouth full of suppressed sensibility, your downcast eyes, the soft blush upon that cheek, you would not say the picture is not like because it is too handsome, or because you want complexion. Thou art heavenly-fair, my love—like her from whom the picture was taken—the idol of the painter's heart, as thou art of mine! Shall I make a drawing of it, altering the dress a little, to show you how like it is? *S.* As you please.

V

In spite of Mr. Le Gallienne or any other critic, I do maintain that this is delightfully lifelike, that you can positively see and hear the twain—our poor, eloquent, love-sick, imaginative literary man, with his long and brilliant speeches, and Sarah Walker—demure, terse, cautious—looking on at this strange spectacle, with those sly, inscrutable, but vigilant eyes of hers. Dialogue after dialogue

follows, always pretty much in the same strain; each equally lifelike with that I have just quoted, each helping to build up the complete picture of this strange couple. Here is one, called "The Message." Thus it begins—

S. Mrs. E—— has called for the book. *H.* Oh! it is there! Let her wait a minute or two.

And then comes this delightful touch, in which the depth of the man's passion, the profundity of the slut's demureness and hypocrisy, are brought out in just a few strokes.

H. . . . How beautiful your arms look in those short sleeves. *S. I do not like to wear them.*

In "The Confession" we have another contribution towards the understanding of Sarah Walker. Its studied mysteriousness, its vagueness, its elusiveness—all show the very perfection of finesse and hypocrisy. All this will not be seen till I have told the sequel of the story.

H. You say you cannot love. Is there not a prior attachment in the case? Was there any one else that you *did* like? *S.* Yes, there was another.—*H.* Ah! I thought as much. Is it long ago then? *S.* It is two years, sir.—*H.* And has time made no alteration? Or do you still see him sometimes? *S.* No, sir! But he is one to whom I feel the sincerest affection, and ever shall, though he is far distant. —*H.* And did he return your regard? *S.* I had every reason to think so.—*H.* What then broke off your intimacy? *S.* It was the pride of birth, sir, that would not permit him think of a union.—*H.* Was he a young man of rank, then? *S.* His connections were high.—*H.* And did he never attempt to persuade you to any other step? *S.* No; he had too great

a regard for me.—*H.* Tell me, my angel, how was it? Was he so very handsome? Or was it the fineness of his manners? *S.* It was more his manner; but I can't tell how it was. It was chiefly my own fault. I was foolish to suppose he could ever think seriously of me. But he used to make me read with him—and I used to be with him a good deal, though not much neither—and I found my affections entangled before I was aware of it.—*H.* And did your mother and family know of it? *S.* No; I have never told any one but you; nor I should not have mentioned it now, but I thought it might give you some satisfaction.—*H.* Why did he go at last? *S.* We thought it better to part.—*H.* And do you correspond? *S.* No, sir. But perhaps I may see him again some time or other, though it will be only in the way of friendship.—*H.* My God! what a heart is thine, to live for years upon that bare hope! *S.* I do not wish to live always, sir—I wished to die for a long time after, till I thought it not right; and since then I have endeavoured to be as resigned as I can.—*H.* And do you think the impression will never wear out? *S.* Not if I can judge from my feelings hitherto. It is now some time since, and I find no difference.—*H.* May God for ever bless you! How can I thank you for your condescension in letting me know your sweet sentiments? You have changed my esteem into adoration. Never can I harbour a thought of ill in thee again. *S.* Indeed, sir, I wish for your good opinion and your friendship.—*H.* And can you return them? *S.* Yes.—*H.* And nothing more? *S.* No, sir.—*H.* You are an angel, and I will spend my life, if you will let me, in paying you the homage that my heart feels towards you.

VI

"YOU are an angel," saith our poor distracted *inamorato.* But he soon has hideous and horrid suspicions that the angel has somewhat of the demon, and with characteristic fatuity he blurts

out his suspicions in the most ingenuous and insulting form; as thus—

But, oh! my God! after what I have thought of you and felt towards you as little less than an angel, to have but a doubt cross my mind for an instant that you were what I dare not name—a common lodging-house decoy, a kissing convenience, that your lips were as common as the stairs.

At once, the sly little hypocrite sees that the tempestuousness of her admirer's temper gives him into her hands. She plays dignity and suffering virtue; holds her tongue; lets him shout on, until she has obtained as full a mastery of all that he knows as Napoleon was able to get, by study, vigilance, and instinct, of the plans of the general opposed to him—and then, of course, the victory is easy—

S. Let me go, sir. *H.* Nay, prove to me that you are not so, and I will fall down and worship you. . . .

I must give something of what follows, though it is not pleasant, for without it the story would lose half its poor, common, human interest, and the picture would be blurred and incomplete.

H. . . . You may remember, when your servant Maria looked in and found you sitting in my lap one day, and I was afraid she might tell your mother, you said—"You did not care, for you had no secrets from your mother." This seemed to me odd at the time, but I thought no more of it, till other things brought it to my mind. Am I to suppose, then, that you are acting a part, a vile part, all this time, and that you come up here, and stay as long as I like, that you sit on my knee and put your arms round my neck, and feed me with

kisses, and let me take other liberties with you, and that for a year together; and that you do all this not out of love, or liking, or regard, but go through your regular task, like some young witch, without one natural feeling, to show your cleverness, and get a few presents out of me, and go down into the kitchen to make a fine laugh of it? There is something monstrous in it, that I cannot believe of you. *S.* Sir, you have no right to harass my feelings in the manner you do . . . I have always been consistent from the first. I told you my regard could amount to no more than friendship.—*H.* You say your regard is merely friendship, and that you are sorry I have ever felt anything more for you. Yet the first time I ever asked you, you let me kiss you; the first time I ever saw you, as you went out of the room, you turned full round at the door, with that inimitable grace with which you do everything, and fixed your eyes full upon me, as much as to say, "Is he caught?"—that very week you sat upon my knee, twined your arms round me, caressed me with every mark of tenderness consistent with modesty; and I have not got much further since.

What follows, in its strange alternation of squalor and romance, of degradation and exaltation, is one of the most curious passages in literature. In some points it reminds one of Alfred de Musset's wondrous and immortal picture of his supper with Rachel.

S. I am no prude, sir.—*H.* Yet you might be taken for one. So your mother said—"It was hard if you might not indulge in a little levity." She has strange notions of levity. But levity, my dear, is quite out of character in you. Your ordinary walk is as if you were performing some religious ceremony; you come up to my table of a morning, when you merely bring in the tea-things, as if you were advancing to the altar. You move in minuet-time; you measure every step, as if you were afraid of offending in the smallest things. I never heard your approach on the stairs, but by a sort of

hushed silence. When you enter the room, the Graces wait on you, and love waves round your person in gentle undulations, breathing balm into the soul! By heaven, you are an angel! You look like one at this instant! Do I not adore you—and have I merited this return? *S.* I have repeatedly answered that question. You sit and fancy things out of your own head, and then lay them to my charge. There is not a word of truth in your suspicions.—*H.* Did I not overhear the conversation down-stairs last night, to which you were a party? Shall I repeat it? *S.* I had rather not hear it!—*H.* Or what am I to think of this story of the footman? *S.* It is false, sir; I never did anything of the sort.

Here, finally, is a passage which makes of Sarah the one and incomparable creation in letters of her class. The slut is not complete without the mixture of pretentiousness and humility which this passage suggests. It is also remarkable as giving a glimpse of those deadly suspicions with which the passion of our poor Hazlitt was crossed.

S. I have high ideas of the married state!—*H.* Higher than of the maiden state? *S.* I understand you, sir.—*H.* I meant nothing; but you have sometimes spoken of any serious attachment as a tie upon you. Is it not that you prefer flirting with "gay young men" to becoming a mere dull domestic wife? *S.* You have no right to throw out such insinuations: for though I am but a tradesman's daughter, I have as nice a sense of honour as any one can have.

VII

AND the pitiful thing about it all is, that this is a transcript—wonderful in its fidelity, appalling in its frankness—from real life. The scenes which

Hazlitt thus commits to paper all took place; the transports and fatuous passion which he describes are to be found in the letters he wrote to his intimate friends about Sarah Walker. All the pitifulness of that separation in Edinburgh from his wife was lost upon him; throughout it all he thought only of his overwhelming, overmastering, and maddening passion. Thus he writes to a friend—he is evidently speaking of his wife and of his trip to Edinburgh to get the divorce—

> Mrs. ——— is actually on her way here about the divorce. Should this unpleasant business (which has been so long talked of) succeed, and I should become free, do you think S. L. will agree to change her name to ———? If she *will*; she *shall;* and to call her so to you or to hear her called so by others would be music to my ears, such as they never drank in. Do you think if she knew how I love her, my depressions and my altitudes, my wanderings and my constancy, it would not move her? When I sometimes think of the time I first saw the sweet apparition, August 16, 1820, and that possibly she may be my bride before that day two years, it makes me dizzy with incredible joy and love of her.

It will be seen—and this is much of the tragedy of the whole business—our poor Hazlitt, throughout the entire business, loved his lodging-house wanton with no love that wanted to dishonour. He sends his best friends on embassies to her—to her father—to her brother-in-law—to everybody who can be expected to help his suit with her; and in the midst of all this, there are such splendid

outbursts of despair as these—equal, I think, to some, at least, of the finest things in Rousseau—

She has shot me through with poisoned arrows, and I think another "winged wound" would finish me. It is a pleasant sort of balm (as you express it) she has left in my heart! One thing I agree with you in, it will remain there for ever; but yet not very long. It festers, and consumes me. If it were not for my little boy, whose face I see struck blank at the news, looking through the world for pity and meeting with contempt instead, I should soon, I fear, settle the question by my death. That recollection is the only thought that brings my wandering reason to an anchor; that stirs the smallest interest in me; or gives me fortitude to bear up against what I am doomed to feel for the *ungrateful.* Otherwise, I am dead to everything but the sense of what I have lost. She was my life—it is gone from me, and I am grown spectral! If I find myself in a place I am acquainted with, it reminds me of her, of the way in which I thought of her,

——and carved on every tree
The soft, the fair, the inexpressive she!

If it is a place that is new to me, it is desolate, barren of all interest; for nothing touches me but what has a reference to her. If the clock strikes, the sound jars me; a million of hours will not bring back peace to my breast. The light startles me; the darkness terrifies me. I seem falling into a pit, without a hand to help me. She has deceived me, and the earth fails from under my feet: no object in nature is substantial, real, but false and hollow, like her faith on which I built my trust. She came (I knew not how) and sat by my side, and was folded in my arms, a vision of love and joy, as if she had dropped from the heavens to bless me by some especial dispensation of a favouring Providence, and make me amends for all; and now without any fault of mine but too much fondness, she has vanished from me, and I am left to perish. My heart is torn out of me, with every feeling for which I wished to live. The whole is like a dream, an effect of enchantment; it torments me, and it drives me

mad. I lie down with it; I rise up with it; and see no chance of repose. I grasp at a shadow, I try to undo the past, and weep with rage and pity over my own weakness and misery. I spared her again and again (fool that I was), thinking what she allowed from me was love, friendship, sweetness, not wantonness. How could I doubt it, looking in her face, and hearing her words, like sighs breathed from the gentlest of all bosoms? I had hopes, I had prospects to come, the flattery of something like fame, a pleasure in writing, health even would have come back with her smile—she has blighted all, turned all to poison and childish tears. Yet the barbed arrow is in my heart—I can neither endure it, nor draw it out; for with it flows my life's-blood. I had conversed too long with abstracted truth to trust myself with immortal thoughts of love.

VIII

WHILE Hazlitt is in Edinburgh, trying to get a divorce from his wife, he writes numberless letters to his friends, in which he describes his alternations of hope and fear—delirious hope, frenzied fear—as to the ultimate success of his suit with Sarah Walker. We are unfortunately without many specimens of the letters on the other side, but we have one; and that, I think, with Hazlitt's comments upon it, will corroborate my contention that the more interesting picture of the two is that which Hazlitt draws of the woman. Could anything exceed in unconscious humour the following?—Hazlitt is writing to a friend, of course, about the one and only subject—

DEAR P——,

Here without loss of time, in order that I may have your opinion upon it, is little YES and NO'S answer to my last.

"SIR,

"I should not have disregarded your injunction not to send you any more letters that might come to you, had I not promised the Gentleman who left the enclosed to forward it the earliest opportunity, as he said it was *of consequence.* Mr. P—— called the day after you left town. My mother and myself are much obliged by your kind offer of tickets to the play, but must decline accepting it. My family send their best respects, in which they are joined by

"Yours truly,

"S. L."

This letter is not wonderful; but mark the lengthy comments which it suggests to our poor Hazlitt—

The deuce a bit more is there of it. If you can make anything out of it (or anybody else) I'll be hanged . . . I suspect her grievously of being an arrant jilt, to say no more —yet I love her dearly. Do you know, I'm going to write to the sweet rogue presently, having a whole evening to myself in advance of my work. Now mark, before you set about your exposition of the new Apocalypse of the New Calypso, the only thing to be endured in the above letter is the date. It was written the very day after she received mine. By this she seems willing to lose no time in receiving these letters "of such sweet breath composed." If I thought so—but I wait for your reply. After all, what is there in her but a pretty figure, and that you can't get a word out of her?

IX

IT will be seen from this that Hazlitt had got to the real ecstasy of madness. Whatever this creature did, was transformed into something unreal, vast, unnatural, until the whole thing was like the phantasmagoria of some opiated dream. This letter of the jade, which I have just given, has the stamp of the lodging-house "slavey" in its every line. Its simple prose would be palpable to any eye which was not frenzied by love. But our Hazlitt is really frenzied; for thus doth he discourse in another letter, when he thinks the loved one has cast him off—

> Who could ever feel that peace from the touch of her dear hand that I have done; and is it not torn from me for ever? My state is this, that I shall never lie down again at night nor rise up in the morning in peace, nor ever behold my little boy's face with pleasure while I live—unless I am restored to her favour. Instead of that delicious feeling I had when she was heavenly kind to me, and my heart softened and melted in its own tenderness and her sweetness, I am now enclosed in a dungeon of despair. The sky is marble to my thoughts; nature is dead around me, as hope is within me; no object can give me one gleam of satisfaction now, nor the prospects of it in time to come. I wander by the sea-side; and the eternal ocean and lasting despair and her face are before me. Slighted by her, on whom my heart by its last fibre hung, where shall I turn? I wake with her by my side, not as my sweet bed-fellow, but as the corpse of my love, without a heart in her bosom, cold, insensible, or struggling from me; and the worm gnaws me, and the sting of unrequited love, and the canker of a hopeless, endless sorrow.

X

HERE is another eloquent passage—Hazlitt is still in Scotland—

Do you know, you would have been delighted with the effect of the Northern twilight on this romantic country as I rode along last night. The hills and groves and herds of cattle were seen reposing in the grey dawn of midnight, as in a moonlight without shadow. The whole wide canopy of heaven shed its reflex light upon them, like a pure crystal mirror. No sharp points, no petty details, no hard contrasts —every object was seen softened yet distinct in its simple outline and natural tones, transparent with an inward light, breathing its own mild lustre. The landscape altogether was like an airy piece of mosaic-work, or like one of Poussin's broad, massy landscapes, or Titian's lovely pastoral scenes. Is it not so that poets see nature, veiled to the sight but revealed to the soul in visionary grace and grandeur! I confess the sight touched me; and might have removed all sadness except mine. So (I thought) the light of her celestial face once shone into my soul, and wrapt me in a heavenly trance. The sense I have of beauty raises me for a moment above myself, but depresses me the more afterwards when I recollect how it is thrown away in vain admiration, and that it only makes me more susceptible of pain from the mortifications I meet with. Would I had never seen her! I might then not indeed have been happy, but at least I might have passed my life in peace, and have sunk into forgetfulness without a pang. The noble scenery in this country mixes with my passion, and refines, but does not relieve it. I was at Stirling Castle not long ago. It gave me no pleasure. The declivity seemed to me abrupt, not sublime; for in truth I did not shrink back from it with terror. The weather-beaten towers were stiff and formal: the air was damp and chill: the river winded its dull, slimy way like a snake along the marshy grounds: and the dim, misty tops of

Ben Leddi, and the lovely Highlands (woven fantastically of thin air) mocked my embraces and tempted my longing eyes like her, the sole queen and mistress of my thoughts! I never found my contemplations on this subject so subtilized and at the same time so desponding as on that occasion. I wept myself almost blind, and I gazed at the broad golden sunset through my tears, that fell in showers. As I trod the green mountain turf, oh! how I wished to be laid beneath it —in one grave with her—that I might sleep with her in that cold bed, my hand in hers, and my heart for ever still—while worms should taste her sweet body that I had never tasted!

XI

IN the midst of all these ravings, there comes from some friend news of a reassuring character—either that the girl is modest in her demeanour, or that she seems ready to marry Hazlitt; and at once he bursts into some such pæan as this—

MY DEAR P——,

You have saved my life. If I do not keep friends with her now, I deserve to be hanged, drawn, and quartered. She is an angel from Heaven, and you cannot pretend I ever said a word to the contrary! The little rogue must have liked me from the first, or she never could have stood all these hurricanes without slipping her cable. What could she find in me? "I have mistook my person all this while," etc. Do you know I saw a picture, the very pattern of her, the other day, at Dalkeith Palace (Hope finding Fortune in the Sea), just before this blessed news came, and the resemblance drove me almost out of my senses. Such delicacy, such fulness, such perfect softness, such buoyancy, such grace! If it is not the very image of her, I am no judge. You have the face to doubt my making the best husband in the world: you might as well doubt it if I was married to one of the

houris of Paradise. She is a saint, an angel, a love. If she deceives me again, she kills me. But I will have such a kiss when I get back as shall last me twenty years. May God bless her for not utterly disowning and destroying me! What an exquisite little creature it is, and how she holds out to the last in her system of consistent contradictions!

XII

AT last Hazlitt is back in Southampton Buildings, and at once rushes to find out his fate. As the decisive hour approaches, passion and delirium increase; and we have a succession of those strange scenes—such as I have already described—in which the grown and brilliantly intellectual man is as clay in the hands of an ignorant, dull, wanton lodging-house wench. And her art, after all, was so simple—the art of holding her tongue, or, when she spoke, of uttering just the kind of words that suited her impetuous lover. "I cannot," he exclaims, "describe her manner. Her words are few and simple; but you can have no idea of the exquisite, unstudied, irresistible graces with which she accompanies them, unless you can suppose a Greek statue to smile, move, and speak."

And then he describes a conversation, in which the young woman uses language of slavey commonplace, such as—"My feelings towards you are the same as they ever were"; or "I despise looks." This last phrase sends our poor critic—whom, it will be remembered, *Blackwood* had described as

"the pimpled Hazlitt," and who had suspected a good-looking lodger—this last phrase sends our poor critic into the seventh heaven.

All this time she was standing just outside the door, my hand in hers (would that they could have grown together); she was dressed in a loose morning-gown, her hair curled beautifully; she stood with her profile to me, and looked down the whole time. No expression was ever more soft or perfect. Her whole attitude, her whole form, was dignity and bewitching grace. I said to her—"You look like a queen, my love, adorned with your own graces!"

But there comes a dreadful moment immediately after—

I grew idolatrous, and would have kneeled to her. She made a movement, as if she was displeased. I tried to draw her towards me. She wouldn't. I then got up, and offered to kiss her at parting. I found she obstinately refused. This stung me to the quick. It was the first time in her life she had ever done so. There must be some new bar between us to produce these continued denials; and she had not even esteem enough left to tell me so. I followed her half-way down-stairs, but to no purpose, and returned into my room, confirmed in my most dreadful surmises. I could bear it no longer. I gave way to all the fury of disappointed hope and jealous passion.

XIII

BUT again the jade has only to utter a cunningly ambiguous word, and her adorer is once more at her feet. Sometimes, indeed, the words have not come from her own precious lips. Her little sister —who seems to have had her share of the family

cunning—has been told by Hazlitt in his rage to bring back the books he has presented to the faithless girl, and especially the books which he himself has written; whereupon, "as if inspired by the genius of the place," the young minx of a sister —some twelve or fourteen years old—exclaims: "and those are the ones that she prizes the most." And at once our Hazlitt bursts into an ecstasy and a palinode—

> If there were ever words spoken that could revive the dead, those were the words. Let me kiss them, and forget that my ears have heard aught else! I said—"Are you sure of that?" and she said—"Yes, quite sure." I told her—"If I could be, I should be very different from what I was." And I became so that instant, for these casual words carried assurance to my heart of her esteem—that once implied, I had proofs enough of her fondness. Oh! how I felt at that moment! Restored to love, hope, and joy, by a breath which I had caught by the merest accident, and which I might have pined in absence and mute despair for want of hearing! I did not know how to contain myself; I was childish, wanton, drunk with pleasure.

XIV

THERE is plenty more of this kind of thing—with these fluctuations of hope and despair repeated over and over again. Let me go forward to the end of the story. Hazlitt has to complain that the girl goes out too often in the evenings; at last he can stand it no longer, and hearing that she

has gone to Somerstown, sets out after her—and here is what follows—

I passed one or two streets, and at last turned up King Street, thinking it most likely she would return that way home. I passed a house in King Street where I had once lived, and had not proceeded many paces, ruminating on chance and change and old times, when I saw her coming towards me. I felt a strange pang at the sight, but I thought her alone. Some people before me moved on, and I saw another person with her. *The murder was out.* It was a tall, rather well-looking young man, but I did not at first recollect him. We passed at the crossing of the street without speaking. Will you believe it, after all that had passed between us for two years, after what had passed in the last half-year, after what had passed that very morning, she went by me without even changing countenance, without expressing the slightest emotion, without betraying either shame or pity, or remorse, or any other feeling that any other human being but herself must have shown in the same situation? She had no time to prepare for acting a part, to suppress her feelings; the truth is, she has not one natural feeling in her bosom to suppress. I turned and looked—they also turned and looked—and as if by mutual consent we both retrod our steps and passed again in the same way. I went home. I was stifled. I could not stay in the house, walked into the street, and met them coming towards home. As soon as he had left her at the door (I fancy she had prevailed with him to accompany her, dreading some violence) I returned, went up-stairs, and requested an interview.

XV

FROM Sarah, naturally, our poor author gets no satisfaction; she denies everything; but Hazlitt soon finds a more communicative source. Going

out in despair into the streets, he comes right plump upon no other person in the world but the redoubtable C—— himself. If anything were required to accentuate the pitifulness of poor Hazlitt's love—the never-ended tragedy of the preference by woman of an unworthy and a dishonouring to an honourable and exalted passion, it is to be found in the portrait which the preferred lover draws of himself and her. Mr. C—— is the frankest of that order—perhaps the most successful order of any men with women—the order that kisses and tells. Listen to this inimitable passage—

I went up to him and asked for a few minutes' conversation on a subject that was highly interesting to me, and I believed not indifferent to him: and in the course of four hours' talk it came out that for three months previous to my quitting London for Scotland, she had been playing the same game with him as with me; that he breakfasted first, and enjoyed an hour of her society, and then I took my turn, so that we never jostled; and this explained why, when he came back sometimes and passed my door, as she was sitting in my lap, she coloured violently, thinking, if her lover looked in, what a *dénouement* there would be. He could not help again and again expressing his astonishment at finding that our intimacy had continued unimpaired up to so late a period after he came, and when they were on the most intimate footing. She used to deny positively to him that there was anything between us, just as she used to assure me with impenetrable effrontery that "Mr. C—— was nothing to her but merely a lodger." All this while she kept up the farce of this romantic attachment to her old lover, and that she never could alter in that respect, let me go to Scotland on the solemn and repeated assurance that there was no new flame, that there was no bar between us but this shadowy love; I leave her on this understanding, she becomes more

fond or more intimate with her new lover; he quitting the house (whether tired out or not, I can't say); in revenge she ceases to write to me, keeps me in wretched suspense, treats me like something loathsome to her when I return to inquire the cause, denies it with scorn and impudence, destroys me and shows no pity, no desire to soothe or shorten the pangs she has occasioned by her wantonness and hypocrisy, and wishes to linger the affair on to the last moment, going out to keep an appointment with another while she pretends to be obliging me in the tenderest point (which C—— himself said was too much). . .

XVI

THE awakening was bitter, but it seems to have been prompt and complete. "I did not sleep a wink all that night," says our poor Hazlitt. But when the first shock was over, the recovery was almost as rapid as the passion. He still ponders over the strange contradictions of the girl's subtle and cunning character. He still thinks of her as "a lovely apparition"; still wonders how "a pretty, reserved, modest, delicate-looking girl" should play the wanton as she has done.

"She defied any one to read her thoughts," she once told me. "Do they then require concealing?" I imprudently asked her. The command over herself is surprising. She never once betrays herself by any momentary forgetfulness, by any appearance of triumph or superiority to the person who is her dupe, by any levity of manner in the plenitude of her success; it is one faultless, undeviating, consistent, consummate piece of acting. Were she a saint on earth, she could not seem more like one. Her hypocritical, high-flown pretensions, indeed, make her the worse; but still the

ascendency of her will, her determined perseverance in what she undertakes to do, has something admirable in it approaching to the heroic.

And finally he completes the picture of her character by declaring that exposure did not in the least abash her. "She has not," says Hazlitt, "shown the least regard to her own character, or shame when she was detected." Her colouring once or twice is the only sign of grace she has exhibited.

XVII

AND now Hazlitt, after his fierce but brief madness, bids his enchantress a farewell. In the suddenness and completeness of the revulsion there is something which makes one even sad.

My seeing her in the street has gone a good way to satisfy me. Her manner there explains her manner indoors to be conscious and overdone; and besides, she looked but indifferently. She is diminutive in stature, and her measured step and timid air do not suit those public airings. I am afraid she will soon grow common to my imagination, as well as worthless in herself. Her image seems fast "going into the wastes of time," like a weed that the wave bears farther and farther from me. Alas! thou poor hapless weed, when I entirely lose sight of thee, and forever, no flower will ever bloom on earth to glad my heart again!

FERSEN AND MARIE ANTOINETTE[1]

I

WHEN Mary Antoinette left her home and became a wife, she was fourteen years of age. The Austrian Court was then represented at Versailles by the Count de Mercy-Argenteau; and it was part of his duty to advise his young countrywoman, and to send to her mother a private account of the young lady's doings. I read with a curious mixture of feelings the *naïf* statement of this elderly adviser, that he had two chief complaints to make of the young wife—she would gamble, and she would not clean her teeth. De Quincey in one of his superfine moods—and he was not often superfine—made very merry, and also wroth, over the passage in Carlyle's translation of *Wilhelm Meister*, which faithfully records the fact that a young actress's comb still bore the marks of its recent use when her lover entered her room; I don't

[1] *A Friend of the Queen (Marie Antoinette—Count de Fersen)*. From the French of Paul Gaulot. By Mrs. Cashel Hoey. London: William Heinemann.

know what De Quincey would have said if he had come across this passage in the reports of the Austrian Ambassador on the life of Marie Antoinette. Upon me it makes the impression of a vivid, lifelike, and almost eloquent touch of nature. More than almost anything else I have read, it makes me realize how utterly a child was this most pathetic figure at the moment when she was thrown into all the difficulties of her new position.

For the child of fourteen found herself at once in surroundings repellent, perilous, and unnatural. The King was a dying and wearied *débauché*; the real sovereign was a painted and vulgar harlot. All the relations of her husband hated the newcomer, spied on her, calumniated her; and her husband—the one stay and refuge in all this stormy ocean of bad example, abhorring jealousy, and calumnious togues—was, if not positively hostile, at least indifferent to her happiness, to her heart, and above all to her person. Imagine, then, the position in which this beautiful and probably spoiled child—you, who have unlearned the angelic and spectral theory of woman's nature—was placed by her husband; and, if you will only do this, you will be able to follow sympathetically her whole life, and especially the episode of it which I am about to tell.

Let us see what the girl-wife was like. First, let me quote the testimony of a woman—a woman,

too, who knew all the secrets of Marie Antoinette's toilet, Mdlle. Bertin, her dressmaker—

Let us picture to ourselves a dazzling fair complexion, in which the tints of the earliest summer roses are blended; large, prominent eyes of azure blue; a forehead crowned with luxuriant fair hair, bearing the impress of majesty and frankness, gave the noblest expression to her whole countenance. This was enhanced by the perfect shape of her nose. The only defect in the face of the lovely Princess was the slight protrusion of the lower lip; but this was a distinctive feature of the House of Austria, and reminded all that she was the daughter of Maria Theresa. Her figure was shapely and tall for her age; her neck and bust were perfect; her hands beautiful, her legs and feet worthy of the Venus de Medicis. Her movements were easy and graceful, her whole person was delightfully harmonious, so that none could behold her without admiration, because she always desired to please all who saw her.

Count Till, who was one of her pages, gives a less glowing, but a somewhat similar, picture. He writes—

She had that which is of higher price upon the throne than perfect beauty, the face of Queen of France, even at those moments in which she sought to appear only as a pretty woman. She had two ways of walking—one was firm, rather quick, and always noble; the other more leisurely and balanced, I might almost say it was a caressing movement, but it never tempted any to forgetfulness of respect. Never did woman curtsey with such grace, saluting ten persons by one bend of her body, and giving each his or her share by the movement of her head and eyes. In a word, it would have come as naturally to every man to bring forward a throne to her as to offer a chair to any other woman.

II

THERE could not be a greater contrast, physically and mentally, than the husband. It is not necessary to blacken poor Louis XVI. in order to make Marie Antoinette more dazzling. The story of their married life is like that of a great many average couples. They clung to each other, and helped and perhaps even loved each other when common disaster threatened them; but for the rest, they probably managed to make life a good deal harder and more bitter and less fortunate to each other. Certainly, the influence of the husband upon the wife in the first years of the marriage was purely evil, and is accountable for much of her folly.

The Duc de la Vauguyon, the tutor of Louis while he was still a Dauphin, seemed to entertain curious notions of married life—

> During the early years of their marriage he took the most ridiculous precautions to keep the young couple apart, even to arranging with the architects that the husband and wife were to have separate apartments. And when he could not avoid leaving them together, as seldom as possible, he even condescended to play the spy to the extent of listening at keyholes in order to hear the conversation between his charge and the dauphiness, at the risk of being surprised in that equivocal attitude, a catastrophe which occurred one day, to the great confusion of all three.

But the ardour of Louis required no such vigilance. Here is how he wrote in his diary, in the first month of his marriage—

Sunday, 13.—Left Versailles. Supped and slept at Compiègne at the house of M. de Saint Florentin. Monday, 14.—Interview with Mdme. la Dauphine. Tuesday, 15.—Supped at La Muette. Slept at Versailles. Wednesday, 16.—My marriage. Apartment in the gallery. Royal banquet in the Salle d'Opera. Thursday, 17.—Opera of *Perseus*. Friday, 18.—Stag hunt. Meet at La Belle Image. Took one. Saturday, 19.—Dress ball in the Salle d'Opera. Fireworks.

The month's chronicle ends with this characteristic record—

31.—I had an indigestion.

In regions beyond the sky there is a race of women who could endure all this without protest or temper. On earth, most women, especially in the days of their youth and beauty, would have resented it, and, if they only had her frankness and courage, would have spoken as Marie Antoinette did,—unless, perhaps, like Mrs. Carlyle,—whose married path was in some respects not at all dissimilar—she gave utterance to her woe in letters to friends. Let us quote our French writer as to how, at all events, Marie felt—

For seven years Marie Antoinette's solitary wifely privilege was the beholding of her stupid husband as he ate, drank, hunted, and did his locksmith work. Is it to be wondered at that she was wounded to the heart by such ordinary indifference, and that she sometimes allowed bitter and sarcastic words to escape her lips? For instance, when she impatiently answered one of her ladies, who urged her not to go out riding—"For God's sake leave me in peace, and know, once for all, that I am not endangering an heir!" The following passage from a letter written at this period by the Queen to the Comte de Rosenberg Orsini throws a strong light upon

the feelings of the neglected wife—"I shall never trouble myself about the stories that go to Vienna," she writes, "so long as you are told of them. You know Paris and Versailles: you have seen and judged. If I had to excuse myself, I should readily confide in you; indeed, I would candidly acknowledge more than you say; for instance, that my tastes are not the same as those of the King, who cares only for hunting and blacksmith's work. You will admit that I should not show to advantage in a forge. I could not appear there as Vulcan, and the part of Venus might displease him even more than my tastes, which, however, he does not dislike."

"I am not endangering an heir"—it is not very refined, and it was terribly imprudent—it was possibly the small mustard-seed that grew to the mighty tree of attacks on her reputation by and by—but it was very human and very significant—and it was the epitaph of her married life.

III

FRENCHMEN are not slow to notice nor slow to take full advantage of the position of a wife who is beautiful, fond of pleasure, and neglected; and our poor Marie Antoinette, being still a child, was only too demonstrative in showing her feelings. She found that while her whole nature craved laughter, brightness, movement, love—she was expected to confine herself within the ring-fence of an etiquette almost as elaborate as that of the Court of Spain. In short, Marie Antoinette was in about the same frame of mind as most of us are in the years before

twenty—full of the intoxication, the dreams, and the madness of youth.

Of all capitals in the world Paris is the most calculated to bring out such tendencies. It was smaller then than now, but it was no less fascinating—no less fond of pleasure. Talleyrand, who saw so many ages of the world, declared emphatically that nobody who had not lived in France before the Revolution knew what an agreeable existence really was. Naturally, the people of whom he was thinking was the class of nobles and ecclesiastics to which he himself belonged. The starving masses doubtless would express a very different opinion. However, Paris was agreeable enough to Marie Antoinette. She went to masked balls; she had night rides in disguise through the streets; she was so fond of cards that on one occasion she sat at the table for thirty-six hours on a stretch. In addition, she had her full share of the common weaknesses of her sex. She was fond of admiration, valued her beauty more than her position; did not always snub the Lovelaces who offered to her the homage which was a dishonour and a peril; her love of dress was almost the proximate cause of her end on the scaffold; and she had no sense whatever of the value of money. Two criticisms were passed upon her by two very different critics. One of her brothers-in-law, who loathed her, gave her the nickname of "Mdme. Deficit," a name which, with national bankruptcy threatening to swallow up

the nation and the throne, was almost like the denunciation that invites assasination. Catherine of Russia, who was a far more kindly student, and who certainly had no prejudice against amusement, legitimate or illicit, made the graver criticism that Marie Antoinette was wrong "to laugh at everything." But then, if we be ready to join in the howl which pursues Marie Antoinette beyond the grave, and if we be not prepared to separate the woman from the mighty and tragic events which were the inevitable but unconscious brood of her personal weaknesses, do let us remember that she was a woman; that without these weaknesses she would not have been so thoroughly a woman, and that the greatest rulers and the greatest wits of her sex have had almost the same weaknesses too. She was more beautiful, but not vainer, than our own Elizabeth; she was not fonder of admirers and admiration; if she were less wise, at least she was more amiable. And if you be disposed to put down Marie Antoinette's craving for a man's love to intellectual deficiency, then think of what the mightiest female spirit, who belonged to the same period, said of woman and of love—"A woman's fame is only the showy mourning worn for happiness"—this is how Mdme. de Staël pathetically described that universal craving for a man's love, for which even a European fame cannot compensate a woman.

There had been many aspirants to the empty

heart of Marie Antoinette. Frenchmen, whatever their merit, do not shine in affairs of gallantry by modesty, timidity, by the absence of vanity, or the presence of consideration. The *soupirants* who gathered around Marie Antoinette had all the marks of their race. Baron Bésenval made an open declaration of love after he was fifty; the Duc de Lauzun "had the audacity to don her livery," "to follow her about for a whole day wherever she went," and "to remain at night like a watch-dog at the door of her apartment." The Duc de Coigny chided her in public and audibly, for speaking to Lauzun. In short, these gentlemen advertised themselves and their passion for the Queen, where a thousand eyes peeped from every window, through every keyhole, from every ceiling, to catch and incriminate a hated obstacle to their self-advancement.

IV

THE lover whose story I am telling to-day was of a type very different from any of these. On January 10, 1774, the Ambassador of Sweden presented to Marie Antoinette a young countryman of his who was then travelling to complete his education—Count John Axel de Fersen—

Count Fersen, who was then in his nineteenth year, attracted attention by his manly beauty and fine expression,

although the latter was rather cold; but, as Tilly remarks, "Women do not dislike impassive faces when they may hope to animate them." The young Swede's countenance was of this kind. His large limpid eyes, shaded by thick black lashes, had the calm outlook of the northern people, the impress of whose melancholy he bore; but this did not always or completely conceal the warmth of a generous nature quite capable of passion. He had a small mouth with expressive lips, a straight, well-formed nose, the fine, thin nostrils that are sometimes a sign of shyness, or, at least, of caution and reserve. His manner bore the impress of nobility and simplicity, his attitude was in every respect that of a true gentleman.

A Royal princess once pathetically complained that while the birds of the air were free to choose their mates, the women of Royal households were not. Doubtless, if Marie Antoinette had been free to choose her mate, she would have at that moment chosen this young and handsome foreigner. They were just about the same age. She was born on November 2, 1755, he on September 4—just two months earlier in the same year. They were both, therefore, just turned nineteen at the moment of their meeting. Marie Antoinette was not slow to reveal the impression which the handsome young stranger made upon her; and he—dazzled, flattered, enamoured—was, it was afterwards remarked, one of the last to leave the ball-room where the first meeting had taken place.

About three weeks afterwards there came a second meeting; it was one very much less formal, much more calculated to challenge gallantry. It

almost makes me shudder, when one thinks of what followed, to read the story of this meeting. Who, that is at all familiar with French literature, does not know the part which the masked ball at the Opera has played in the history of the French nation? The scene, with its bacchanalian wildness, its audacity, its intrigue, its strange combination of wild revel and haunting and menacing tragedy—the scene, I say, is one that has caught hold of the imagination of the whole world. The novelist and the dramatist have exhausted their art in its description, and with the result, that there are few of us who are not able to bring the brilliant spectacle at once before his mind's eye. To pick at random from recollections of the place that crowd the memory, I can see on that stage the terrible scene when the Duc de Berry was slain by Louvet's dagger; or that other scene, made more real by the hand of genius than reality, where the Corsican Brothers visit the Opera-house as the ante-chamber to death; or that other scene, real and yet commingled with more than one work of fiction, in which George Sand, infuriated by jealousy, glides in to find Alfred de Musset surrounded by a crowd of raucous-throated and hard-eyed *cocottes*. Ah! there is something terrible, and also something eminently characteristic of Paris and her history, and the race of "tiger-monkeys" which inhabits it, in that strange panorama of wild laughter, mad dancing, sobs of despair, echoes of coming doom!

And who will not think of all this as he reads this passage?

At this epoch, the opera balls were the resort of the highest, if not the most staid, society. On that evening there was a crowd. The Swedish gentleman wandered about among the masks, looking and admiring when a domino approached and began to coquet with him gracefully. The form was elegant, the voice was charming; he lent himself willingly to the adventure which offered itself; perhaps he had been seeking one. Although his conversation was not usually animated, it must be supposed that he acquitted himself well on the occasion, as the fair mask talked to him for a long time. There was whispering around them: who was his unknown? At last as usual the secret came out, and to his astonishment he recognized the Dauphiness herself, who took as much pleasure in making herself known as she had derived from preserving her *incognito*. Unfortunately, the crowd also had recognized Marie Antoinette, and it gathered around the two with the ill-bred eagerness of curiosity which embarrasses, but is not embarrassed. The Dauphiness, to escape from this, had to retire to her box, where the Dauphin and the Comte de Provence, who had accompanied her on that evening, were awaiting her. Fersen left the scene at three o'clock in the morning, bearing away a more deep and vivid remembrance of this second meeting than of the first, and in his mind a new-born secret of sympathy with the radiant Princess.

There was one other meeting—this time at Versailles, where the Court lived. Of that time all we know of Fersen's impressions is that he thought the "Dauphin danced very badly,"—which doubtless was true. There is a curious proof that Fersen impressed people considerably, in the fact that the Swedish Ambassador thought it worth while to make him the subject of a special and a very

eulogistic despatch. Evidently this reserved, taciturn young man, with the beautiful features and the impassive face, had the power of impressing people.

V

FERSEN left France after this brief visit, concluding the grand tour, which was then a necessary part in the education of all young men of rank. At the end of three years he returned, and proceeded at once to Versailles. He immediately presented himself at the Court, where a gratifying surprise awaited him. Marie Antoinette was no longer the Dauphiness, but the Queen; and when he appeared she immediately exclaimed—"Ah! an old acquaintance." "The rest of the Royal family," reports Fersen to his father, "did not say a word."

By this time, too, Marie Antoinette was in a position to entertain her friends after her own fashion. On New Year's Day, 1774, her husband had presented her with the Little Trianon; and here she held those informal and pleasant little receptions which did so much to amuse her then, and by and by helped to create the storm of execration, before which she went down to bloody death.

Fersen soon became a member of Marie's little set, and the Queen was not cautious or self-con-

trolled enough to disguise the interest she took in him. Before long it was an open secret that Fersen was in love with the Queen, and it was a general impression that the Queen was in love with Fersen.

I have already said that it was one of the faults of Marie Antoinette—she was so very human after all, poor thing—not to resent the impression she made. This feature in her character is put judiciously and amiably, but conclusively, by Rivarol, the Royalist pamphleteer—

> Always belonging more to her sex than to her rank, she forgot that she was meant to live and die upon a real throne; she longed too much for the fictitious and fleeting empire that beauty confers upon ordinary women, and which makes them the queens of a moment.

You see, I am not sparing Marie Antoinette. What I want to present of her is an honest and a lifelike picture, extenuating nothing nor aught setting down in malice. It should be added, too, that Fersen was by no means the sole admirer whose advances Marie Antoinette did not sufficiently discourage; in short, she was a very pretty woman,—she knew it,—she liked to be told it.

VI

IT were well for her that all her admirers had been as discreet, as humble, as unselfish, and as loyal as Fersen. What fondness there was, was

shown not on his side, but on hers. There is a story of a scene one day in which the Queen almost openly avowed that she returned the passion which she had inspired—

> One day, when she was singing to her harpsichord, Fersen was by her side, and she was betrayed by her own music into an avowal which song made easy. Her eyes sought the Count's, while her voice uttered the passionate words of some fashionable opera, and his ill-disguised emotion emphasized an evident allusion.

The compromising couplet is in these two lines from the now-forgotten opera of *Didon*—

> Ah ! que je fus bien inspirée
> Quand je vous reçus dans ma cour.

A Court is a school of scandal, a whispering gallery, a panopticon; every wall has ears, every window has eyes, every tongue is filled with malice and evil sayings; and especially was this the case in the Court of Marie Antoinette, where the agents and friends of the brothers-in-law who hated her, were at every corner. Indiscretions, such as that I have mentioned, did not pass unnoticed or unrecorded. It will, therefore, be understood what kind of a babblement broke forth when it was announced that after eight years of married life, Marie Antoinette was for the first time *enceinte*. There is a report—it is denied, and let us hope, for the sake of human nature, that it is untrue—that the King's brother, the Comte de Provence, was indecent enough to give sanction

to the current suspicion on so open an occasion as the christening of the new-born Princess, and in the church of Notre Dame. He was present as representative of the King of Spain, who was to be godfather of the child, and here is the story, which was current at that time, of his behaviour—

The Grand Almoner, who officiated, having asked what name was to be given to the child, Monsieur answered—"But we don't begin by that; the first thing is to know who are the father and mother." The sardonic tone in which these words were spoken gave them emphasis that could not escape anybody's attention; and besides, they were let fall on well-prepared ground.

VII

It is needless to say that the report became universal that Fersen was the father of the new babe. Thus the position of the Queen became extremely serious, and it was impossible for Fersen and for her that things should continue to go on in the old way. Fersen adopted, therefore, a resolution which, like many another act of his, shows a chivalrous self-abnegation that must help to keep his name sweet. For the second time he resolved to fly the too subtle enchantment of the Queen's eyes. A sufficient excuse was necessary, and, fortunately, it was at hand. The expedition of Lafayette and Rochambeau to help the American patriots in the War of Independence, was in preparation. Many of the chief young noblemen of

France were going; Fersen announced that he was about to follow their example.

Marie Antoinette was not slow to appreciate the magnitude of the sacrifice. She could not—perhaps she would not—prevent it, but she was unable to overcome the open expression of her feelings.

We have a picture of this episode in the career of the Queen and Fersen more trustworthy than even the memoirs of the courtiers. Fersen's father was one of the most important men in the Court of Gustavus III., the King of Sweden; perhaps that may account for the fact that young Fersen's relations to the Court were considered important enough to be made the subject of a grave Ambassador's despatches.

The fact, at all events, is, that the author of the work before me was able to unearth from the Swedish archives in Upsala the following letter, which was addressed to the King of Sweden by Count Creutz, his Ambassador in Versailles, on April 10, 1779. I need make no apology for quoting the document in full; it is interesting not merely because of its historical importance, but as a picture of an episode in life—true, eloquent, and touching,—because it has all the naturalness and frankness of a document never intended for the public eye.

I must confide to your Majesty that the young Count Fersen has been so well received by the Queen that several

persons have taken umbrage. I own that I cannot help thinking she has a liking for him; I have seen indications of this too certain to be doubted. The young Count has behaved, under these circumstances, with admirable modesty and reserve, and his going to America is especially to be commended. By absenting himself he avoids danger of all kinds; but it evidently required firmness beyond his years to resist such an attraction. During the last days of his stay the Queen could not take her eyes off him, and as she looked they were full of tears. I entreat your Majesty to keep their secret for yourself and Senator Fersen (the father of Count John). When the approaching departure of the Count was made known, all the favourites were delighted. "How is this, Monsieur?" said the Duchess de Fitz-James, "you forsake your conquest!" "Had I made one," he replied, "I should not forsake it; I go away free, and, unfortunately, without leaving any regrets." Your Majesty will own that the Count's answer was wise and prudent beyond his years. The Queen, moreover, behaves with much more self-restraint and prudence than formerly. The King not only entirely complies with her wishes, but shares her tastes and pleasures

Let us not stop to inquire whether the young Swede spoke or suggested that which was not true when he gave his answer to the Duchess de Fitz-James. True or false, it is an answer which only a gentleman could have made.

VIII

FOR three years Fersen is absent from France and from Marie Antoinette, and when he returns to Europe it is to find that both are drifting rapidly towards the mighty events of which we know. Fersen, for this and other reasons, gives up

self-denying ordinances, asks and obtains through the influence of his King and his father, the position of Colonel of the Royal Swedes—one of the many foreign regiments in the service of France—and oscillates between Valenciennes,—where he is in garrison,—Paris, and the Little Trianon at Versailles. Things have gone so far that the poor Queen may not have to care any more for appearances. The affair of the diamond necklace—the calumnies of the pamphleteers, the hatred of her husband's family, her own follies, personal and political — all together have made her name a rallying-cry of national hatred. She need not now be particular about her character; she has no character to lose or to regain.

Fersen is pretty constantly at her side. On one of his visits to the Trianon she gives him a miniature of herself and a pocket-book; and on the first leaf there are written, in her own hand, a few verses in French,—tender, gay, and familiar. Fersen is at her side, I say, a loyal, brave, tireless friend; but a prudent counsellor—no. It is, perhaps, a necessary part of his tenacious, clinging, faithful nature that he should have fixed opinions as well as stable affections; and in the new order of things he can see nothing but rampant blackguardism, brigandage let loose, and all that is sacred and holy trampled under brutal and vulgar feet. Of all counsellors there can be no worse to this woman—also narrow, proud, obstinate, and heroic-

ally brave. And thus these two beings, brought together so strangely, aggravate their worst weaknesses to the destruction of both. But that is a historical reflection; for the moment let us give ourselves up to the purely human element in the story. And in those two hands stretched out to each other, above raging and murderous mobs, over frontiers, over seas of blood, through the walls of dungeons, in night and despair, and then past the gulf of death—there is a picture, the pathos of which will never cease to move the hearts of men and women.

IX

FERSEN watched the progress of the Revolution with the inflexible hatred of an inconvertible aristocrat, with a supreme and ineradicable contempt for the French character,—which he expresses often and naturally enough to prove its perfect sincerity and conviction,—and with the care for the Queen's safety as his chief and almost sole concern.

As for her, the days came soon when the population were ready to pass from foul insult to actual assault; and in these days the figure of Fersen appears ever by Marie Antoinette's side, cheering, watching, ready to defend her, inseparable the two by day—inseparable also, say the gossipers and memoir-writers, by night—though on this point

there is plenty of evidence and strong attestations from even unfriendly critics that frivolity was the full extent of Marie Antoinette's sinning. It would take me too far from my story to more than briefly allude here to those two awful days—October 5 and 6, 1789—when all the vice and violence, the hunger, the despair, and the suffering of Paris, overflowed to Versailles. It is a tale that scores of picturesque pens have described, and it concerns us not here, save so far as it relates to Fersen and Marie Antoinette. It will be remembered that the mob demanded and obtained admission for a deputation of the women to see the King; that the interview took place and was friendly on both sides; that then tumult broke out again; and that so for hours the mob surged round the Royal palace, every moment threatening to enter and plunder and kill. Finally came night, and the dreadful dawn; then the shot from one of the King's bodyguards, and the death soon after of one of the national guards from Paris; and finally the terrible overflow of the ferocious, maddened mob into the palace, hungry for bread, thirsting for blood. Let us go to Carlyle for a description of what followed—

In a few moments the grate of the inner and inmost court, which they name Court of Marble; this, too, is forced or surprised, and bursts open; the Court of Marble, too, is overflowed; up the grand staircase, up all stairs and entrances, rushes the living deluge! Deshuttes and Varigny, the two sentry bodyguards, are trodden down, are massacred

with a hundred pikes. Women snatch their cutlasses, or any weapon, and storm in Menadic. Other women lift the corpse of shot Jerôme, lay it down on the marble steps; there shall the livid face and smashed head, dumb for ever, *speak*. Woe now to all bodyguards, mercy is none for them! Miomandre de Sainte-Marie pleads with soft words on the grand staircase, "descending four steps"—to the roaring tornado. His comrades snatch him up by the skirts and belts, literally from the jaws of destruction, and slam-to their door. This also will stand few instants, the panels shivering in like potsherds. Barricading serves not. Fly fast, ye bodyguards; rabid insurrection, like the hell-hound chase, uproaring at your heels.

Meantime, this terrible deluge of hunger, savagery, and anger has, amid all its chaos and rushes, one definite cry and goal. Instinctively it knows that the real opponent with which the demands of the Revolution have to deal, is not the wavering, kindly, shy, poor man who is King, but the haughty, narrow, obstinate, and brave woman whom, to his ill-fortune and hers, he has wed; and "Death to the Austrian woman"—except that they did not always call her "woman"—was shouted from thousands of ferocious throats. To her chamber, then, the deluge directed its uncertain and tumultuous course. Again let us go to Carlyle—

The terror-struck bodyguards fly, bolting and barricading; it follows. Whitherward? Through hall on hall! Woe! now towards the Queen's suite of rooms, in the farthest room of which the Queen is now asleep. Five sentinels rush through that long suite; they are in the ante-room, knocking loud. "Save the Queen!" Trembling women fall at their feet in tears, are answered, "Yes, we will die; save ye the

Queen!' Tremble not, women, but haste, for lo, another voice shouts far through the outermost door, "Save the Queen!" and the door is shut. It is brave Miomandre's voice that shouts this second warning. He has stormed across imminent death to do it; fronts imminent death having done it. Brave Tardivet du Repaire, bent on the same desperate service, was borne down with pikes; his comrades hardly snatched him in again alive. . . . Trembling maids-of-honour, one of whom from afar caught glimpse of Miomandre as well as heard him, hastily wrap the Queen, not in robes of state. She flies for her life across the Œil-de-Bœuf, against the main door of which, too, insurrection batters. She is in the King's apartment, in the King's arms; she clasps her children amid a faithful few. The Imperial-hearted bursts into mother's tears: "Oh, my friends, save me and my children." . . . The battering of insurrectionary axes clangs audible across the Œil-de-Bœuf. What an hour!

X

BEFORE all this has taken place, Fersen has fled and—according to the story I have already glanced at—in disguise from the Queen's bed-room. But he did not go from the palace, for the danger had not yet disappeared; indeed, for a while, danger was more threatening than ever. Lafayette had at last arrived, and had succeeded in stopping the wild rush of the mob on the rooms of the King and Queen, but the mob was still outside—"A roaring sea of human heads inundating both courts," as Carlyle puts it, "billowing against all passages. Menadic women, infuriated men, mad with revenge, with love of mischief, love of plunder." A further

symptom of the temper of this rabble is that the two hapless bodyguards—Deshuttes and Varigny—who had been killed, have been already beheaded; and their heads, "on pikes twelve feet long," are already being paraded through the streets of Versailles. And above all other shouts rose the cry that the King and Queen should accompany the mob back to Paris. It was then that Lafayette proposed a heroic and desperate remedy—

"Madame," he ventured to say to the Queen, "what is your personal intention?" In the hour of peril the daughter of Maria Theresa showed all the courage of her race. "I know the fate that awaits me," she replied firmly, "but my duty is to die at the feet of the King, and in the arms of my children." "Then, Madame, come with me!" said Lafayette; and he moved as though to lead her to the balcony, facing the crowd.

I do not know where the author of this book gets the authority for his description of what follows, for he gives no authority; but if the narrative be true, it throws a curious light on the relations of Fersen and Marie Antoinette. In this picture, the Swedish officer becomes the arbiter of her fate at one of its most vital and tragic hours. Here is the narrative.

Brave as she was, Marie Antoinette hesitated. "What, alone upon the balcony? Have you not seen the signs that have been made to me?" In truth, those signs were equally terrible and expressive. "Yes, Madame, let us go there," insisted Lafayette, who risked his own life by this act. Fersen was present. *By a look the Swedish gentleman gave fresh courage to the Queen of France. She decided instantly*, and valiantly walked forward into the view of the people.

Lafayette could not speak; his voice would not have been heard. He resorted to a "hazardous but decisive sign"; he took the Queen's hand and kissed it. This action worked an instantaneous change. Courage, daring, produced their usual effect; the conquered crowd passed from rage to admiration; a great clamour arose, carrying to the astonished ears of the actors in this scene, cries of "Long live the General!" "Long live the Queen!"

This picture of the unhappy Queen—the woman for whose blood all that savage crowd was thirsting—who was about, at that moment, to risk all upon a single cast, with every chance of losing all—this picture of her looking, from all the thousands near and around her, to this one loved face for a sign, and, when given, accepting it without hesitation, is one of the most striking, significant, and pathetic in all the love stories of the world. In the relations between a man and a woman, which can inspire such a scene, there is a sublimity; to that exchange of looks there is a framework of horror, terror, and then of cleaving of soul unto soul, unparalleled in human history.

At last these terrible days of October 5 and 6 came to an end; the King and Queen had to set out for Paris, the faithful Fersen following among the members of the King's household; and while Marie Antoinette seeks a dismantled bed and a rickety chair in the long-disused Tuileries, Fersen takes rooms in the Rue du Bac, to watch over her, plot for her, work for her, risk his neck scores of times to save her.

XI

FOR, indeed, he risked his head by the part he took in preparing that attempt at escape which ended so disastrously at Varennes. It was a singular circumstance, and one that produced a good deal of angry and uncharitable comment, that the Queen should have selected a foreigner as the chief agent in carrying out this last attempt to escape from the iron bracelet of doom gradually tightening around herself and the King. For us the choice of Fersen is mainly important in revealing the unquestioning confidence which he inspired in the Queen, and which, it will be seen, he deserved. It was he who was instrumental in obtaining the *berline*, or heavy travelling coach, in which the King and Queen, with their children, were to travel; he attended to every detail, he tried the *berline*, he reconnoitred the roads, and finally, he came on the night of the flight to carry out the first and most dangerous part of the journey. It is characteristic of his thoughtfulness and thoroughness, that in the *berline* there was a box with the articles of toilette for the Queen, and an ample supply of *bœuf à la mode*. It was he also who brought to the Queen the "plain and humble garments" in which she was to disguise herself. Poor Marie Antoinette! One of the many charges proved against her was that she helped to reveal

the secret of her flight by the number of fine travelling dresses she ordered beforehand, and that she also impeded her movements by insisting on bringing two maids with her. Well, well!

Let us again to Carlyle—

> New clothes are needed; as usual, in all epic transactions, were it in the grimmest iron ages. Consider "Queen Chrimhilde with her sixty sempstresses" in that iron Nibelungen Song! No Queen can stir without new clothes. Therefore, now, Dame Campan whisks assiduous to this mantua-maker and to that; and there is clipping of frocks and gowns, upper clothes and under, great and small; such a clipping and sewing as might have been dispensed with. Moreover, her Majesty cannot go a step anywhither without her Nécessaire: dear Nécessaire of inlaid ivory and rosewood, cunningly devised, which holds perfumes, toilette implements, infinite small queen-like furnitures; necessary to terrestrial life. Not without cost of some five hundred louis, of much precious time and difficult hoodwinking, which does not blind, can this same necessary of life be forwarded by the Flanders carriers—never to get to hand. All which, you would say, augurs ill for the prospering of the enterprise. But the whims of women and queens must be humoured.

This characteristic passage puts the case against Marie Antoinette; and, as I have already said, I have no desire to spare her. Indeed, it is well that we should understand her on all sides—her weak as well as her strong. It is the combination in her of all the faults and weaknesses of her sex that bring into greater relief her spirit, courage, and loyalty. It is a combination of weakness and strength that makes the womanliness in her, and makes her stand out as so interesting a study. We don't care much for the bravery of a virago.

XII

AT last the fateful June 20 came—the day fixed for the flight. Fersen had managed in some way or other to get frequent access to the Tuileries, in spite of the rigorous watch which was established over the King and Queen—for soldiers slept outside every one of their doors; and Fersen saw both the King and Queen in the evening just a few hours before the hour appointed for the start—

They were expecting him, and in that last interview the respective characters of the three personages were revealed. Marie Antoinette, full of trouble and emotion at the approach of the hour of departure, full of fear for her children, her friends, herself, was in a state of nervous excitement, and wept profusely. Louis XVI., as passive as usual, listened to Count Fersen, who was cool and resolute. The Count reminded the royal couple of the dangers which they were about to incur; but the King and Queen with one accord answered him that "there could be no hesitation, and that they must go." Time was flying. It was necessary that the Queen should go to the promenade with her children, according to custom, so that she might be seen there. At about six o'clock Fersen took leave and withdrew. "Monsieur de Fersen," said the King earnestly, "whatsoever may happen to me, I will not forget what you are doing for me." The Queen's tears spoke no less plainly to Fersen's heart.

It was part of the plan that Fersen should himself take the King and Queen through the streets of Paris, to the spot where the *berline* was awaiting them. I go again to the inspired pages of Carlyle to describe the part of Marie

Antoinette and Fersen in this great moment. I should premise that Gouvion—mentioned in this passage—was second in command to Lafayette, and that he had heard something of the intended flight from one of the Queen's women, who was his mistress—

And Gouvion, distrusting his own glazed eyes, has sent express for Lafayette; and Lafayette's carriage, flaring with lights, rolls this moment through the inner arch of the Carrousel—where a lady, shaded in broad gypsy hat, and leaning on the arm of a servant, also of the runner or courier sort, stands aside to let it pass, and has even the whim to touch a spoke of it with her *badine*—light little magic rod, which she calls *badine*—such as the beautiful then wore. The flare of Lafayette's carriage rolls past. All is found quiet in the Court of Princes; sentries at their post; Majesties' apartments clothed in smooth rest. Your false chambermaid must have been mistaken. Watch thou, Gouvion, with Argus' vigilance, for, of a truth, treachery is within these walls. But where is the lady that stood aside in gypsy hat, and touched the wheel-spoke with her *badine?* Oh, reader, that lady that touched the wheel-spoke was the Queen of France! She has issued safe through that inner arch, into the Carrousel itself; but not into the Rue de l'Echelle. Flurried by the rattle and rencounter, she took the right hand, not the left; neither she nor her courier knows Paris, he indeed is no courier, but a loyal, stupid *ci-devant* bodyguard disguised as one. They are off, quite wrong, over the Pont Royal and river; roaming disconsolate in the Rue du Bac; far from the glass-coachman who still waits. Waits, with flutter of heart; with thoughts—which he must button close up under his jarvie-surtout. Midnight clangs from all the city steeples; one precious hour has been spent so; most mortals are asleep. The glass-coachman waits, and in what mood? A brother jarvie drives up, enters into conversation, is answered cheerfully in jarvie dialect; the brothers of the whip exchange a

pinch of snuff; decline drinking together, and part with good-night. Be the Heavens blest! here at length is the Queen-lady in gypsy hat; safe after perils; who has had to inquire her way. She too is admitted; her courier jumps aloft, as the other, who is also a disguised bodyguard, has done; and now, oh glass-coachman of a thousand—Count Fersen, for the reader sees it is thou—drive!

XIII

COUNT FERSEN did drive through the sleeping city, and finally, at the Barrier de St. Martin, found the *berline*. The "glass coach" was drawn up alongside the *berline;* the King and Queen, and the other occupants, passed from one carriage to the other without alighting; and Fersen, jumping on the box of the *berline*, made for Bondy, and there bade the King and Queen adieu. It is characteristic of that care for others which Marie Antoinette always showed so nobly in hours of peril, that she insisted that Fersen should leave them at this point; she feared that, being a foreigner, it would go harder with him than with the others. Besides, the separation was to last for but two days. In two days' time the King and Queen would be at Montmédy, in the midst of the loyal troops, and there Fersen would be among those glad friends who gathered around them. To Montmédy, then, Fersen set out. He had arrived at Arlon on his way thither, when whom should he meet in the street face to face but the Marquis de

Bouillé, the commander of the troops which were to receive and protect the King and Queen. Fersen did not require more to know that the expedition on which he had laboured for so many weeks, which he had started with such hope and with such success, had ended in black and complete disaster.

Fersen did not stay to indulge in futile grief. It had been arranged between him and his Royal friends that he should go to Brussels in case of failure, to be free there to rouse Europe to arms in their defence. It was in Brussels, too, that he would find the Count Mercy d'Argenteau, the Austrian Ambassador of whose complaints about poor Marie Antoinette's neglect of her teeth we have already heard. Poor Fersen was to get the first of his disillusions about foreign intervention when he came to speak to the old-time servant of Marie Thérèse and the lifelong counsellor of her child. "*Il voit noir*"—"he takes the gloomiest view," this is the entry in which Fersen records the impression he got of Mercy d'Argenteau's views of affairs. Among the relatives of the King —especially in his brother—who formed part of the emigration in Brussels—even bitterer deceptions awaited Fersen. They were all thinking of themselves, their claims, their expectations, and their pretensions.

Amid it all there is a gleam of light. Marie Antoinette, whether she loved Fersen or not, was

at least able to appreciate the beauty and fidelity of his devotion. Between him and her, wherever she might be, whether in the palace or in the prison, there was an active correspondence. Even to-day there is something infinitely touching in the notes written by this woman's hand in face of the raging mob, of the hurricane of insult and execration, and under the shadow of the scaffold. Within a few days after the return from Varennes, Fersen received the following note—

Be at ease about us; we are alive. The heads of the Assembly seem inclined to behave with some kindness. Speak to my relations about taking steps from the outside; if they are afraid, terms must be made with them.

This was written on June 28. On the following day a second note, more touching and affectionate, brought him a repetition of these assurances—

I exist . . . how anxious I have been about you, and how I grieve for all you are suffering from having no news of us. May heaven permit this to reach you. Do not write to me; it would endanger you; and, above all, do not come back here under any pretext. It is known that it was you who got us out of this place; all would be lost if you appeared. We are closely watched night and day. I do not mind that. . . . Be tranquil; nothing will happen to me. The Assembly wishes to treat us gently. Adieu. . . . I shall no longer be able to write to you. . . .

The second of these letters is very characteristic. The anxiety it reveals for Fersen, the determination to tranquillize his mind while there seem such grim and gathering clouds around herself—

all this is proof of a fine heart. And then, what farewell in literature is more pathetic than this—"Adieu; I shall no longer be able to write to you."

But the correspondence was not to close at this point. From the papers that have been published, a new light is thrown on the period that followed the flight from Varennes, and it is evident that in the two years which elapsed between that episode and the death of Marie Antoinette, Fersen was—as this book puts it—"the chief secret agent between the Tuileries and foreign Courts."

He was the centre of correspondence; it was he who held all the threads of the schemes, interventions, and negotiations in which the captive Royal family were concerned; and his action—completely unknown at that period, and hardly suspected twenty years ago, but now clearly revealed, through the publication of his papers, or at least such of them as his descendants thought proper to make known—throws an entirely new light upon this period of our history.

XIV

ZEAL, devotion unto death, energy that knew no fatigue, loyalty and affection that knew no questioning—all these things Fersen had in abundance. Few stories of the loyalty which a Queen and a woman can inspire are fuller, or as full, of those sublime qualities. But looking at the whole story from a political point of view, it comes out with greater clearness than ever that Fersen and Marie

Antoinette between them had a terrible share of the responsibility for all the disasters that befell her, her husband, her children, and her dynasty. Indeed, Marie Antoinette—it is clear from the evidence published in this book—never cared for France, never really regarded it as her home; was always ready to sacrifice French interests to the interests of her own country. Here is an extract from one of her letters to her mother which alone suffices to prove that indictment against her: it was written in October 1778—

I have every motive for acting, for I am quite persuaded that the glory of the King and the good of France are concerned in this, without reckoning the welfare of *my dear country*.

"Her dear country," Austria! A very natural and almost irresistible feeling; but not a feeling in which a Queen is at liberty to indulge who has, in taking a husband from another land, also sworn to make his people her people, and his gods her gods. Moreover, it has been proved that she actually thought it right to reveal the secrets of the Ministers of her husband in the interest of her native country. Here is the stern indictment, confirmed by facts, brought against her on this point by a French writer—

In concert with Mercy, she besets Louis XVI., deceives the Ministers, does all she can to get promises and agreements out of them in the presence of the King, whom she had previously persuaded, delays the couriers while she informs her brother of the decisions which they will bring, and so

gives him time to guard against them. And then Joseph II. accepts our mediation, it is she who makes the conditions to be proposed to France more onerous, and she does this in a quick, business-like way, indicating the obstinacy of a rather crafty mind. This sort of thing goes on uninterruptedly for eighteen months, and certainly cannot be called a refusal to interfere in political matters, an attitude of impartiality and respect to the interests of the Austrian Court.

I am able to touch but slightly, in such an essay as this, on one of the most important and interesting portions of Marie Antoinette's story — her relations to her husband's political views and acts. The documents bearing upon this part of her life have an intense human, as well as political interest. I cannot—though it will take me a little away from the immediate subject of this article—resist quoting one of these documents. It is written by Marie Antoinette to her brother at a time when France and Austria were in conflict. That is to say, it is written by the Queen of one nation to the ruler of the other; and though the ruler was her brother, it was blind folly, if not downright treason, to utilize her position as the King's wife to help her own country against that of which she was one of the rulers. Here is the letter—

I will not contradict you about the shortsightedness of our Ministry. I have spoken of it more than once to the King, but it would be necessary to know him to understand how I am restricted in means and resources by his character and his prejudices. He is naturally taciturn; *when I reproach him with not having spoken to me about certain matters, he does not get angry, but seems embarrassed, and sometimes tells me simply that it did not occur to him to do*

so. M. de la Vauguyon alarmed him about the control his wife would try to exert over him, and, moreover, his black soul took pleasure in frightening him with all sorts of phantoms conjured up against Austria. M. de Maurepas thought it to his advantage to keep all these ideas in the King's mind. M. de Vergennes pursues the same plan, and probably makes use of his Foreign Office correspondence to employ treachery and lying. I have spoken of this to the King plainly, and more than once. He has sometimes answered me with displeasure, and, as he is incapable of discussion, I have not been able to persuade him that his Minister was either self-deceived or deceiving him.

XV

HERE is a domestic interior painted to the life; its unconsciousness is its sublimity. Marie Antoinette, when she wrote it, was just twenty-nine years of age; but she has not a moment of self-doubting. In the desire of the experienced Frenchmen who advised her husband in the interests of their own country she can only see ignorant partiality; it never even occurs to her that she on her side may be lacking in judgment, experience, and, above all, in impartiality. It is this tremendous self-confidence in their own knowledge, which is so often shallow, in their own judgment, which is so often mere narrowness and personal prejudice, that makes women so often the worst and most perilous advisers of men in political crises.[1]

[1] What made this complete self-confidence the more remarkable is that Marie Antoinette was constantly warned by her own people that it was quite unjustifiable. There is a

And what a delightful picture that is of the poor King, seeking to evade the foolish and narrow advice of the stronger-willed and more persistent wife. "*He is naturally taciturn, and when I reproach him with not having spoken to me about certain matters, he does not get angry, but seems embarrassed, and sometimes tells me simply that it did not occur to him to do so.*" Poor Louis! It were far better, perhaps, that his apparent weakness, and not the Queen's strength, had dictated the policy of the Court during these days. There would have been a Constitution, it is true, and some trappings of royalty might have to be surrendered, and, perchance, poor Marie Antoinette's wardrobe would have been less resplendent. But she and her husband might have died quietly in their beds.

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draft of a letter written to her by her brother, when she was obstructing Turgot in his reforms. It is a very curious and interesting document. "As far as I can understand," writes the Emperor, "you meddle with an infinity of things that, first of all, do not concern you, which you know nothing about. What business have you, my dear sister, to interfere with the placing of ministers, to get such a department given to this one, and such to that, in order to influence in favour of a particular law-suit, and to create a new and extravagant charge at your Court? What studies have you made fitting you to mix yourself with the affairs of government of the French monarchy?—you, an endearing young person, whose thoughts centre in frivolity, in your toilet, in your whole day's amusement, who never read or listen to reason a quarter of an hour in a month, who never reflect, never meditate, I am sure of it, never. Only the impression of the moment concerns you; your only guides are the words and arguments of your *protégés*."

It was, perchance, part of the charm of Fersen to Marie Antoinette that his intellect was as narrow, his principles as inflexible, his faith in the old order, his hatred of the new men, were just as great as her own. There is scarcely a word from his hand in all the documents published in these volumes which reveals a real insight into the events of those times; and all the political words and acts which he dictated helped to bring about the Queen's undoing.

However, I will not dwell now on that part of the story; I return to the pleasanter part, which deals only with the strenuous efforts of Fersen to save the woman. It is a proof of the strength of the bonds which united them, that in spite of all the precautions which surrounded the Tuileries —the King was actually not let out of sight even when he was dressing—Fersen and Marie Antoinette managed to carry on an active and constant correspondence with each other. Here is how it was done.

Before she was separated from Count Fersen she had arranged a cipher with him; their letters would have kept the secret of their contents, even had they fallen into the hands of their enemies. They also adopted the device of writing with invisible ink between the lines of an insignificant correspondence. The modes of despatch were of various sorts. Sometimes the letters were confided to trustworthy persons like Baron de Goguelat. . . . Sometimes the papers were hidden in a box of biscuits, in a packet of tea or chocolate, in the lining of a garment, or in the binding of revolutionary works. The persons for whom they were ostensibly destined were mostly foreigners.

XVI

SOME of the letters, which thus passed between Fersen and Marie Antoinette, are published in these volumes. They have a morbid interest, especially in their abounding proof of the incurable political prejudices by which Marie Antoinette brought such awful destruction on all she held dear. The King, we know, had to accept the Constitution. "To refuse would have been more noble," is the comment of Marie Antoinette. "Make your mind easy," she writes to Fersen, who has heard that she is being influenced by Barnave and the Constitutionalists, "I am not going over to the extremists. If I sit or have relations with any of them, it is only to make use of them." And in the same letter—"The French are atrocious on every side." "Nothing is to be done with the Assembly," she writes in another letter, "it is a mob of scoundrels, madmen, and fools." And so on, folly on folly, madness on madness.

And then, just as we are in despair over all this insane obstinacy, the mighty love of the mother, the heroic bravery of the woman, are brought before us, and once more we are conquered. Here for instance is a pathetic little picture in the midst of all that terrible tornado outside the Tuileries—

As for myself I keep up better than I could have expected, considering my prodigious fatigue of mind, and that I go out

very little. I have not a moment to myself between the people that I must see, my writing, and the time that I must be with my children. The latter occupation, which is not the least, is my sole happiness, and when I am very sorrowful I take my little boy in my arms, I kiss him with all my heart, and that consoles me for a moment. Adieu, adieu once more.

Now for one of the lion-hearted outbursts. She is complaining that the King, while "he is not a coward," for "he has a great passive courage," "is overpowered by shyness and distrust of himself." "He shrinks from commanding, and dreads beyond everything having to speak to an assemblage of men." And then comes the magnificent outburst—

A Queen who does not reign must, under these circumstances, remain inactive and prepare to die.

"A Queen who does not reign,"—the longing of so many strong women that Destiny could change their sex has rarely been more finely expressed; but see likewise in this sentence the proof of the appalling and tremendous consequences which may come when the incurable disabilities of sex are not accepted. For it was this desire of "a Queen" to "reign" that helped to bring Marie Antoinette and her husband to the guillotine.

XVII

MEANTIME our poor Fersen is eating his heart out amid the cold wariness of the Austrian Ambassador, the selfishness of the King's relatives, the divided counsels of the different monarchs—above all, the mere cunning and duplicity of the Austrian Emperor, Marie Antoinette's brother. And all the letters from Marie Antoinette, though they try to reassure him, only result in making him feel her misery more bitterly. At last some events bring matters to a crisis—Fersen can't stand it any longer. The first of these events is that his own King—Gustavus of Sweden—is fiery in his resolves to help the King and Queen, is tireless in proposals for their rescue, and finally proposes that another attempt should be made at flight. It is foolish, said the King of Sweden, to try and escape by the frontier. The proper plan is to try the sea. Let the King try his luck by making for Calais or for Ostend. Let him get an Englishman to help, for "these people are bold in action and generous," and above all, let the fugitives travel separately. But all these things require consultation and arrangement between the Royalists and their friends outside, and so there must be an envoy; and who can the envoy be but Fersen?

Fersen was not an incautious or thoughtless

man, and he would probably have seen the impracticability of his King's plan if his judgment had been free from the distracting fumes of love; but the prospect of seeing the Queen again overcame all the cold objections of reason, and so Fersen undertakes the mission.

But Marie Antoinette will not have it. With the loyalty to her friends, even in her own darkest hours, which is a brilliant feature in her character, she remonstrates. The danger to Fersen, she declares, is even now greater than it was on that great night—it was only some months ago, but to Marie Antoinette, with all that had happened in between, it must have seemed something like the interspace of an eternity—the danger is greater than on that great night when he drove the glass coach on to Bondy—

He had been indicted with the accomplices of the flight to Varennes, but his absences had saved him from arrest; he was, however, still "contemned as contumacious," for he had not been included in the amnesty, which affected actual prisoners only. His relations with the Royal family, his participation in the Varennes scheme, were well known; he had everything to fear if he were recognized. On this venture he staked his head.

The resistance of the Queen was finally broken down, possibly for the same reason as that of Fersen's, and in Fersen's diary of January 21, 1790, appears the significant and fateful entry—"The Queen has consented to my going to Paris." Fersen required but the word.

He began immediately to prepare for his mission, fixed his departure for February 3, and announced it to Marie Antoinette ; but a vexatious occurrence obliged him to alter his intentions. A report was spread that the King intended to escape by way of Calais, and Paris was in commotion. The Queen wrote to Fersen to postpone his journey until the decree respecting passports had been issued and tranquillity was restored. Then a few days later she again wrote to him to the effect that passports "for the individual" were required for everybody ; that the rumour of the King's intended escape had caused the watch kept upon the Royal family to be much more strict, and that he (Fersen) must relinquish a journey which had now become impossible.

XVIII

BUT the "vision splendid" of another interview with the Queen had by this time caught the imagination of Fersen, and he was not to be stopped ; and even if he were, a circumstance intervened which would have broken down even a stronger resistance than he was disposed to make to the loud calls of his heart. This was the arrival of M. de Simolin, the Ambassador of Russia to France.

First M. de Simolin was a proof that one could cross the frontier in spite of the new passport regulation, and then Simolin had something to tell of the situation of the Queen. He, like Fersen, was a devoted friend of the Royal Family —"had seen the Queen in secret during his stay in Paris," and "gave his friend terrible news con-

cerning her." "The situation was dreadful,"—such was M. de Simolin's story—"the danger was growing greater every day." And then Simolin repeated one of Marie Antoinette's lion-like utterances—

I would rather submit to anything than live longer in the state of degradation I am in, for anything seems preferable to the horror of our position.

Baron de Simolin added "that he had been moved to tears by hearing the unhappy woman speak thus," and even as he told the story again, "he again gave way to keen emotion." And at this moment the sympathetic fellow was on his way to Vienna to plead the Queen's cause and to deliver letters from her to the Emperor and the Empress. One can easily imagine the effect of all this on Fersen. There was no more hesitation; he must go.

The lessons of the disastrous journey to Varennes had not been lost on Fersen. Poor Louis had been betrayed largely by his allowing himself to be everywhere seen, and by the number of his companions. Fersen did not take with him even a single servant. His one companion was Reutersvaerd, a fellow Swede, who had proved his trustworthiness, and who had been wholly trusted as a confidential messenger by Gustavus, the Swedish King—

Fersen himself relates the precautions that were taken to put the French police off the scent, should they exhibit an

indiscreet curiosity concerning the travellers. He was provided with a letter of credit as Minister of the Queen of Portugal. Letters and a memorandum from the King of Sweden to the King of France were placed under cover, and addressed to him in that capacity.

I cannot do better than continue the story of this perilous journey in the language of the author—

They arrived at eight o'clock in the evening at Tournay, where they slept. At half-past three in the morning they set out again (this was Sunday, February 12), being only moderately easy in their minds, for Reutersvaerd had been talking with a M. D'Aponcourt, who had told him "he could not reach Paris for a full fortnight, as he would be stopped everywhere." M. D'Aponcourt was wrong: they crossed the frontier unmolested. "At Orchies nothing was said to them." They breakfasted at Bouchain and dined at Bonavy, were detained four hours at Peronne by an accident to their carriage, and reached Gournay, where they remained till the next day, at half-past one a.m. Notwithstanding the facility of their journey, the travellers were very prudent; and Count Fersen, who was effectually disguised by a big wig, avoided the blunder that betrayed Louis XVI.; he kept himself well hidden in the carriage, and as much as possible avoided showing himself on any occasion. On Monday the 13th, they stopped at Louvres to dine, and half-past five they entered Paris, well pleased to have reached the end of their journey.

XIX

ONE can well imagine the rush of feeling which must have come over Fersen's heart as once more he found himself in the French capital. He had not been there since that night of June 20, when he

drove Marie Antoinette from the Tuileries. She was still there; but in what different circumstances —the Tuileries had been transformed from a palace to a prison; and steadily, surely, swiftly, she was going along the road that ended in the tumbril and the bloody knife.

Fersen alighted in the Rue de Richelieu at the Hôtel des Princes; and went in search of Goguelat, a faithful friend of the Royal Family, and one of his colleagues in preparing the flight that ended at Varennes. Goguelat was not at home, though Fersen had written to him that he was coming. Fersen went back to the Hôtel des Princes, in the Rue de Richelieu, to find Reutersvaerd. There was no Reutersvaerd; for he could not find a room in the hotel, and had gone—no one knew whither. Back again went our poor half-distracted Fersen to Goguelat's, and there he watched in the open street for hour on hour, until, when seven o'clock came, Goguelat appeared.

You can see the rushing tide of feeling which was in Fersen's soul from the feverish hurry of all his movements at this moment. He had left Reutersvaerd before he could discover whether there was room for them in the Hôtel des Princes, and he had not spoken to Goguelat for more than a few moments when "they took their way to the Tuileries without delay."

And then came an intoxicating moment which must have been some compensation for all that

weary and perilous road, for all those months of weary and sickening separation. For Marie Antoinette was there expecting him—alone.

We have no details of that first interview; and are obliged to be content with two lines in Fersen's journal, who again proves himself "a hero of romance, but not of a French romance," by his discreet reserve. Here is the entry: "Went to the Queen; passed by my usual way; fear of the National Guards; not seen the King."

Next evening Fersen saw the King; visiting the Tuileries when it was dark; and then the three discussed the plan of escape by the coast, which had been suggested by the King of Sweden. But the King would not even listen to the proposal; it was mad, impossible, and besides, poor man, he had given his word not to attempt such a thing, and he must keep his word. "For," says Fersen, in a burst of admiration, "he is an honest man."

I need not follow in detail the political discussions in which the three friends took part—though they have a keen human interest. Above all things do these discussions bring out that experience which is the common lot of all who have been in a position to test human nature; the baseness of those we have served, the generosity of others to whom we have never looked. "I have been forsaken by everybody," said poor Louis, in one of the rare outbursts which he permitted himself.

Similarly the Queen—though in tones of bitter and more unsubdued pride. Her pride, indeed, is

instinctive and unconquerable. When later on she and the King are being taken to the Temple—

Pétion is afraid the Queen's looks may be thought scornful and produce provocation ; she casts down her eyes, and does not look at all. (Carlyle.)

And she was then going to prison! And a few days previously to this, when the King had returned to the Tuileries after his failure to rouse the troops to a last outburst of loyalty—

Her Majesty bursts into a stream of tears. Yet, on stepping from the cabinet, her eyes are dry and calm, her look is even cheerful. "The Austrian lip and the aquiline nose, fuller than usual, gave to her countenance,' says Peltier, "something of majesty, which they that did not see her in these moments cannot well have an idea of." (Carlyle.)

XX

SPEAKING to Fersen's sympathetic ear, Marie Antoinette has no need to measure her words or spare her enemies. With one exception all the Ministers were "traitors"; Cashier de Greville was a "wretched little lawyer at seven hundred francs a year"; Narbonne thought only of himself, and was the lover of Mdme. de Staël. Then came the tale of the journey to Paris after that hour when she and Fersen had parted at Bondy. Yes, Gouvion had learned of the flight from Rocherette, who was his mistress; then there was the awful story of the return from Varennes; thirteen hours

in the carriage—that fateful *berline*—"in intense heat, without daring to lower the blinds."

But even in these times the lion-hearted woman had not forgotten her pride or her courage, as this significant episode will prove—

Pétion boasted of knowing everything. He told her that they took a hackney coach close to the Tuileries, and that it was driven by a Swede named ——? pretending not to know the name—and then he asked if she could tell him. She answered, "I am not in the habit of asking the name of hackney-coach drivers."

And then the six weeks that followed! What odious, cruel persecution they had undergone from the watching and the spying—

The officers of the National Guard always in the room adjoining theirs, and wanting actually to sleep in their room. It was with difficulty that they were made to remain between the double doors. They even came in during the night, to make sure that she was in her bed; and one night the officer, finding she was not asleep, took a seat by the side of her bed and began to talk. But this was not all, a camp was formed under their windows, and day and night a constant racket and noise was kept up.

It is one of the last interviews poor Marie Antoinette will have with a sympathetic and loving hearer; she poured out her whole heart to Fersen, and Fersen's tears answered hers.

As the Queen recapitulates all these wrongs and miseries, her thoughts turned to those who had forsaken and those who had served her. She could not refrain from owning that in general the former owed everything to her, and the latter nothing. So much ingratitude and so much fidelity aroused

many and deep emotions in her, and Count Fersen, sharing all her feelings, was moved to tears.

"Thus ended an interview," saith our historian, "which did not lead, and could not lead, to any practical result, but which at least gave Marie Antoinette a brief moment of happiness."

There was nothing for Fersen now to do but to return to Brussels; but as he had described himself as a "messenger" from Portugal, he had to go some distance from Paris. He went to Tours, and came back by Fontainebleau on February 19—

He did not venture to go to the Tuileries, but it was painful to him to abstain from doing so. He wrote asking whether there were any commands for him. The answer was an order to come and take leave of the King and Queen. Accompanied by Goguelat he entered the château for the last time, while his companion Reutersvaerd waited for him below in the square. He supped with the King and Queen took tea with them, and did not leave them until midnight. Fersen had beheld Marie Antoinette for the last time.

XXI

FERSEN got back to Brussels after some adventures and some very narrow escapes from detection and arrest. Again in Brussels he sets to work to obtain rescue for the Queen—indefatigable, vehement, and fatal. For it comes out clearly that many of the words and acts of the foreign

monarchs, which roused France to fury, and thereby produced the *levée en masse* of the nation—the massacres, and the final downfall of the King and Queen—were the joint result of the inspiration of Marie Antoinette and Fersen.

For instance, one of the things which did most to goad France to fury was Brunswick's proclamation declaring that every National Guard would be treated as a rebel; that "all inhabitants who shall dare to defend themselves shall be put to death and their houses burnt;" that "if the least outrage be done to the Royal family, and if their safety be not immediately provided for," "their Imperial and Royal Majesties will hand Paris over to a military executive and to total overthrow." Our author states positively that this manifesto was due to Fersen, who,

> moved by the piteous cries of distress which reached him from Paris, and agonized by his utter powerlessness to save her whom he loved, poured out his wrath in this document, and by his influence induced the chief of the allied troops to adopt threats which he, Fersen, had often longed to fulminate.

Poor Fersen! It was this manifesto that finally destroyed the hopes of his friends; it was dated July 28. On August 3, the deposition of the King was demanded; on August 8, there came that terrible invasion of the Tuileries which ended in the massacre of the Swiss Guards and in the flight of the King and Queen to the Assembly,

and, in fact, in the destruction of the Monarchy. This is what poor Fersen had accomplished by his fiery manifesto! Then followed the September massacres, the death of the Princess Lamballe, and the other horrors; and Fersen at last feels that the terror which Brunswick's manifesto was meant to inspire, had really recoiled on the friend of the Royal family. "I have never been so much afraid," writes poor Fersen on September 16, and he had soon after to leave Brussels and fly further on for safety.

Meantime the active correspondence between himself and the Queen went on. Amid it all—amid her revelations of the movements of the French troops—there are those outbursts which make you love her in spite of all her faults. Immediately after that terrible day in the Tuileries, when her head was demanded several times as she stood alone, separated from the King—it is recorded "her face never changed—" immediately after this she writes to Fersen—"Do not trouble yourself too much on my account. Take care of yourself for our sake," she writes in invisible ink, "and do not distress yourself about us."

And in another letter she writes—"Our position is frightful; but do not disquiet yourself too much." Just fancy this poor creature, immediately after her escape from being torn to pieces, having courage to try and cheer the spirit of her absent friend!

Indeed Marie Antoinette never lost heart till close to the end. "Perhaps," says our author, "this correspondence kept her up."

Mdme. Campan, speaking of Marie Antoinette, says—"She was always awake at dawn of day, and desired that neither the outside shutters nor the blinds should be closed, so that her long, sleepless nights might be less wearisome. About the middle of one of these nights, when her room was lighted by the moon, she gazed at it and said to me that a month hence she should look at that moon when she should be loosed from her chains and see the King at liberty."

XXII

AFTER the death of the King, Fersen still strives to save the Queen. He is alternately in hope and in despair; he thinks that Dumouriez will save her; he importunes Mercy d'Argenteau, the Austrian Ambassador, is disgusted and horrified by the callousness of the wily diplomatist; finally, he spends much time over a plan to save her by buying over Danton. There is a curious little note in which Fersen describes his interview with Dumouriez after that general had definitely abandoned the Republicans, and had arrived in his flight at Aix-la-Chapelle. Fersen, of course, wanted to hear the latest news from Paris; he was accompanied by his friend, Simolin. Here is how he describes the interview—

We made our way through a crowd, and found him in a lower room. The windows were besieged by people. Three

aides-de-camp were with him. He recognized Simolin; I introduced myself, and he paid me a compliment, saying that he ought to have known me by my handsome face.

Thus our poor Fersen's good looks had passed into a saying. Ah! those good looks—they account for a great deal in human history.

Meantime Marie Antoinette was approaching the final stages in her march to death; and poor Fersen hears it all, days after of course, sometimes weeks; and in the pages of his journal we find recorded the story of his anguish, as thus—

They say that the hackney coach which brought the unfortunate Queen to the Conciergerie was filled with blood; that the driver did not know, but that he suspected whom she was, having had to wait a long time; that on arriving at the Conciergerie, it was some time before they alighted; that the men got out first and the women after; that she supported herself on his arm, and that he found his coach all filled with blood.

"In vain does he add," comments our author, "'but all this is not very authentic.' Perhaps he strove to deceive himself. It was authentic; these sad details are only too true."

Time after time Fersen sits down to record the details of the Queen's sufferings. There is a reverence, an affection, a minuteness in the record which enables us, reading between the lines, to see how keenly Fersen felt it all. We can see him as in his mind's eye he conjures up, with love's painful power of second-sight, the agonies of the Queen—

Her room was small, damp, and ill-smelling; there was neither stove nor chimney; there were three beds—one for the Queen, the other by the side of hers for the woman who served her; the third for the two gendarmes, who never left the room on any occasion or under any circumstances whatever.

And here are two final extracts which will reveal what Fersen felt in describing what another suffered; here is the first—

The Queen was dressed in a black loose jacket (caraco); her hair was cut short on her forehead, and quite grey at the back; she was so thin that she could hardly be recognized, and so weak that she could scarcely keep herself upon her legs. She had three circlets on her fingers, but no jewelled rings. The woman who served her was a sort of fishwife, of whom she complained very much. The gendarmes told Michonis that Madame did not eat, and that if this went on she could not live; they said her food was very bad, and one of them brought a small stale chicken, and showed it to Michonis. "There," he said, "is a chicken which Madame has not eaten, and it has been served to her these four days."

This is the second extract—

The Queen always slept fully dressed in black, expecting every moment to be massacred or led to the scaffold, and wishing to go thither in mourning. Rougeville says that Michonis wept while confirming the statement of the hæmorrhage from which the Queen suffered, and told him that when it was necessary to procure the black jacket and some indispensable linen for the Queen from the Temple, he could not go until after a "deliberation" of the Council.

Then came October and the approaching trial of the Queen. By a curious coincidence Fersen met just at that moment the man who was the chief

agent in defeating the flight which began in the glass coach we have left so far behind us. The first alarm that ended in the stoppage of the flight at Varennes was given by a trooper named Drouet, who detected the King and revealed the secret in all the wrath of atrabilious patriotism. He was taken prisoner by the Austrians at Maubenge, and by a singular coincidence there thus met on foreign soil the chief agent in planning and the chief agent in preventing the escape of the Queen.

"The sight of that infamous wretch put me into a fury," writes Fersen; "and the effort which I made not to say anything to him on account of the Abbé de Limon and the Comte de Fitz-James who were with us made me ill."

And then came Marie Antoinette's execution. Fersen's comment—bald, unliterary—is nevertheless eloquent—

Although I was prepared for it, and since she was transferred to the Conciergerie have been expecting it, the certainty overcame me; I had not strength to feel anything. I went out to speak of this misfortune with my friends Mdme. de Fitz-James and Baron de Breteuil, whom I did not find. The *Gazette* of the 17th speaks of it. It was on the 16th at half-past eleven that this execrable crime was committed, and the Divine vengeance has not yet fallen upon the monsters!

It may be remembered that the Duchess de Fitz-James was the Court lady who in happier days reproached Fersen for deserting his "conquest" when he went to America.

And here is Fersen's final word—

"I can think only of my loss," writes Fersen, a few days later. "It is dreadful not to have any positive details. That she should have been alone in her last moments without consolation, without any one to speak to, to hear her last wishes! That is horrifying! The monsters of hell! No; without vengeance my heart will never be content."

But, as M. Gaulot writes—"It is not granted to Fersen's love either to save Marie Antoinette or to avenge her."

XXIII

FERSEN lived for seventeen years after the death of Marie Antoinette, and he died as he had lived—as one should do, whose dramatic life required a fitting close. He had many griefs before he died, and the "handsome Fersen" of former days became "a moody and melancholy man."

The King of Sweden—Marie Antoinette's fiery and vehement friend—had been succeeded by his son Gustavus IV. Gustavus IV. loved Fersen and loaded him with honours, but when Gustavus fell his Minister fell along with him. Fersen was very unpopular—we have seen enough of him to understand that he could not be a popular Minister. With the deposition of Gustavus, Fersen's preferment ended, and soon after his unpopularity reached a climax and ended in a catastrophe. The Duke of Sudermania, who had been proclaimed King in succession to Gustavus IV., being childless, had

adopted Prince Christian of Holstein-Augustenberg as his heir; the heir died soon after, very suddenly, and at once the cry was raised that he had been poisoned in the interests of the fallen dynasty; and that Fersen, who was regarded as the rallying-point of the old order, was at the bottom of the plot. It is said that the popular passion was fed by money and by drink, and the new King, who hated and dreaded Fersen, dropped an impudent, or perhaps an intentional hint, that, after all, Fersen deserved a lesson.

The dead heir was to be buried publicly, and on June 20, that day of days, when, nineteen years before, Fersen had driven Marie Antoinette from the Tuileries on the great but disastrous break of liberty. Fersen must have thought of all that as, in his position as Grand Marshal, he went "in full ceremonial dress," and in "the gilded coach drawn by six white horses," to meet the funeral procession outside the city; especially as he had been told of the danger that threatened him. But Fersen went on.

When the procession entered the city it was received with insulting shouts; the mob spat on Fersen's coach, abused him, menaced him, and finally tore up stones from the pavement and flung them at his carriage. At last they flung themselves on the coach, unharnessed the horses, and dragged Fersen out. He escaped into a *café*, but the crowd followed him in, tore off his decorations,

his cloak, and his sword, and flung them out of the window, and then dragged him out into the street again. The troops came up, but it was not their business to rescue an enemy of the King, and Fersen was left to his fate. He was dragged to the Hôtel de Ville—

> There, although surrounded by the mass of his tormenters, he had a moment's respite. They seemed to grant him this breathing-space from an impulse of pity. Seating himself upon a bench, he asked for a mouthful of water; it was brought to him by a soldier of the City Guard. But the mob began again to threaten him with death, and to reproach him with having poisoned the Crown Prince. They struck him with their fists and their sticks, they tore out his hair and also his ear-rings, with pieces of the flesh. The people outside, closely packed in the courtyard of the Hôtel de Ville, shouted to them to give up Count Fersen. . . . Again they dragged him out; they flung him down on the staircase, and there, in the courtyard, the ruffians completed their crime. At length the victim, trampled under the feet of those bloodthirsty brutes, uttered his last groan. Their fury was not slaked by his death; they fell upon the corpse, stripped it, mutilated it, and carried the fragments about the town. . . . The deed was done between twelve and two o'clock in broad day, in the city of Stockholm, under the regular government of a legitimate King.

After I had finished my narrative of the lives of these two people, whose love and its tragic end had so much likeness, who each reached the greatest depths of tragedy, I turned to their portraits at the beginning of the book. Marie Antoinette looks out at us in the perfection of her beauty—with fine eyes, with proud look; the full bosom is covered with delicate and beautiful

lace, the lips have the smile made for love, laughter, and joy. Fersen is taken as he might have looked when, a boy of nineteen, he first saw the Queen: the forehead is high, the nose straight, the lips beautifully curved; there is a look of infantile delicacy and freshness and sweetness in the beautiful face. The unexpectedness of human destiny, the inevitableness of human woe, could not be much more eloquently expressed than by the contrast between these two lovely and tender faces and the lots of those to whom they belonged.

CARLYLE AND HIS WIFE[1]

I

THERE are few events in literary history which have produced so much controversy as the publication of Froude's Memoirs of Carlyle and his wife. It is hard to determine which, of two of the greatest literary spirits of our time, suffered the more in the discussion which these famous volumes provoked. The veneration, and even affection, which Carlyle had conquered for himself from almost the entire world in the majestic sunset of

[1] *Carlyle's Early Life*, 2 vols., by J. A. Froude. Longmans. *Carlyle's Life in London*, same author, same publishers. *Letters and Memorials of Mrs. Carlyle*, same author, same publishers. *Reminiscences of Thomas Carlyle*, edited by J. A. Froude; same publishers. *Life of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, by Mrs. Alexander Ireland. Chatto & Windus. *Carlyle* (in *English Men of Letters*), by John Nichol. Macmillan. *Portraits des Femmes: Madame Carlyle*, par Madame Arvède Barine. Hachette. *New Fragments*, by Professor John Tyndall. Longmans. *Edinburgh Sketches*, by Professor David Masson. Adam & Charles Black. *Literary Recollections*, by Francis Espinasse. Hodder & Stoughton.

his long, dark, and disturbed day, were dissipated in the course of the single week after these Memoirs had appeared; and there succeeded a dislike and a disrespect that have gone the length of dimming, in some minds at least, the glorious splendour of his genius. And as this work of disillusion was done by the hand of one of his dearest friends, the friend lies, and will probably always lie, under the charge of having been an unfaithful and guilty guardian of the reputation he ought to have preserved and helped to glorify. I do not share these views. The highest testimony that any man—author or otherwise—can give is to truth—truth benignant or cruel, flattering or horrible, disheartening or stimulating. And on what subject is truth demanded more sternly from the conscientious writer than on that great and complex problem, human life? and of all problems in human life, on which again is truth so important as in the story of that double life in one, with its joys, terrors, its infinite capacities for happiness or woe—the union of man and woman? If ever there was a man who preached the moral that a life truly told was a need, an enlightenment, and a duty to humanity, it was Carlyle: and assuredly nobody had a better right. To the science of the world he has contributed nothing; to the political thought of the world, nothing, or worse than nothing; to the history of the world, his contributions are of very doubtful value; but on that

great subject, the study of the human heart and human soul, he has told more than almost any man of his time or of any other time. Where, outside Shakespeare, is there a portrait gallery so rich, so picturesque, so faithful, so full of photographic truth, lurid insight, morals and lessons, finely preached, as that which is to be found in his splendid pages? And all these numerous volumes of his would be so much waste-paper if it were not that he has sought throughout them all to give to the world the story of human life, as he understood it, faithfully, honestly, and bravely. The solemn heritage he left to his friend was that he should do by him as he had done by others. It is true that Froude has placed Carlyle standing penitent, bare-headed, and humbled in the immortal market-place of history; but this lonely old man that is thus revealed to us, stripped of his glory by his own hand, striking his forehead in his despair and shame, and casting ashes on his own head that otherwise might be covered with a crown of light —is there not in it something worthy of him at his best? is there no dignity and loftiness as well as humiliation in the picture? In all Confessions there is an element of egotism, perhaps of self-glorification, strong though unconscious; but in this picture of all that was gloomy, selfish, and awful in his own life, the materials for which Carlyle deliberately bequeathed to his nearest friend, I find Carlyle's logical and honest fulfilment

of his own lifelong gospel—that the world should know life in its truth, naked, bleak, and chill; and a deliberate perpetuation of the self-abasement by which, in all the recoil of remorse, he sought to atone for his cruelty and selfishness to his wife.

II

THE publication of these Memoirs of Carlyle and his wife have found further justification, if that were needed. It is important to the world that Carlyle should be known as he really was. To have sent him down to posterity as a serene philosopher and a blameless prophet, would have been to perpetuate a great lie. The world has more lies than it can stand already, and it would be justified in especially resenting an addition to the stock from two men who, above others, preached the supreme obligation of truth. It was almost as equally important that the world should be made to know the real Mrs. Carlyle. One of the results of these Memoirs has been to make us understand that the woman whom the mighty genius and the arrogant selfishness of Carlyle so overshadowed, was almost his equal in literary gifts, and vastly his superior in courage, in unselfishness, and generally in character. To have suppressed the picture of Mrs. Carlyle dead, would have been an ignoble addition to the wrong which

had been done to the living woman. They are false friends of Carlyle or of Froude who would have made them parties to such a fraud upon the memory of the dead, and upon their own high ideals of personal and literary conduct.

III

THERE is something even more to the purpose. Carlyle the writer is immortal. When you have said your last word against his wild judgments, his exaggerations, his affectations and contortions of style—and all these objections you can make with justice—he remains the most vivid, powerful, and entrancing writer of English prose in our century. But I have come almost to the conclusion that Carlyle the man—and still more Carlyle the husband—will be as potent and lasting a memory as Carlyle the writer. In the Memoirs of him and his wife we have a household laid bare by two pens, bereft of all the reticences of real or false shame, and gifted beyond most others with the power of vehement or subtle description. The problem of the union of man and woman must always remain the supreme and central question of society; and here is a contribution to its elucidation and its literature, richer than any the world has yet received. At no time was such a contribution more needed than at this hour. It is no

exaggeration to say that the relations of men and women are at this moment undergoing a bolder, more honest, and more pitiless analysis than in any generation since the great upheaval at the close of the last century. And in the end of our century we have to some extent a new factor in the great arbitrament: we have the voice of woman. It is true that in the last century, as in most centuries of French history, woman played a large part. In our own country, however, woman has become articulate on her inner thoughts, her claims, her wrongs, for the first time in the memory of even youths among us; and in the France of the last century, and even in the France of to-day, the liberty of discussion, of influence, large as they are, which are allowed to woman, stop short at the frank revelations of her own soul, and the control of her own lot.

IV

THE pathos of Mrs. Carlyle's life as a wife and an elderly woman is brought into fuller relief by the background of her gay, audacious, and pampered childhood. It is hard to imagine what further gifts, apparently, fortune could have bestowed on a woman. She was pretty; she was brilliant; she was rich and well-born according to the scale of her surroundings; and she was

an only child. All the testimony I have been able to find, agrees in representing her as having that brightness and joyousness of temperament which is a more opulent heritage than money or beauty or genius.

She was born on July 14, 1801, in Haddington. In her being mingled blood so antagonistic as that of John Knox and of gipsies. How far these hereditary influences survived in her generation it is hard to say; but we may trace in such a descent the complexity of her own character—its waywardness, its gaiety, its sternness of creed, and its hardness of heart.

In her case the child was eminently the mother of the woman. There was a rigidity of line in the main features of her character which makes a certain uniformity in her life. She was precocious in everything—in learning, in daring, and in aggressiveness. As a girl she might be briefly described as a very brilliant and very attractive specimen of the "tomboy." She once fought a boy with bare fists. A parapet or a ledge over Haddington stream had one of those points of danger which fascinate and appal boys. Jeanie Welsh got up one morning early, "went to Nungate Bridge, lay down on her face on this ledge, and crawled from one end to the other, at the imminent risk of breaking her neck by a fall into the river beneath." Then she had a characteristic habit at this period, which has as a sequel one of the most pathetic

incidents of her life. I tell it as it is charmingly told by Madame Arvède Barine, in her excellent essay on Mrs. Carlyle—

> In Haddington, when anybody saw a young girl perched on a wall, they said at once, "That's Dr. Welsh's daughter." A long time after her marriage, when she could pluck up courage to return for the first time to the spot where she had been so happy, nobody could recognize her, so greatly had cares, even more than years, aged, withered, and wasted her. But a passer-by guessed her name, by an instinctive revival of memory, when he saw her mount a fence. "That's Jeanie Welsh," he cried; "no other woman would climb a wall instead of going through the door. Yes, you're Jeanie Welsh.'"

Similarly, in learning, she always longed to do as boys did. Her mother clung to the old-fashioned gentility, which regarded any feminine knowledge, beyond the usual accomplishments, as almost improper: the father, a broader and more sympathetic nature, took the daughter's side. The question was settled when the child repeated a Latin declension which she had learned from a boy, and triumphantly cried, "I want to learn Latin, please let me be a boy." She was allowed to learn Latin, and she did so to such good purpose that she was able to translate Virgil when she was nine years of age. In the same way she showed a taste for mathematics, and other highly ungenteel and unladylike tendencies, as woman was understood in the early years of our century. She is said to have been similarly clever in working out problems

in Euclid. The ardour of her temperament showed itself in the energy with which she devoted herself to these studies. She used to get up at five o'clock in the morning, and would tie a weight to her ankle lest she should not wake early enough. There is always to me something pathetic in these heroic struggles after self-culture of the young. It is part of the dream and prospect of the perfectibility in all things which is their first vision and first conception of this decidedly imperfect world. The perfection has to begin with themselves. Their whole energies used to their utmost strength: their time occupied worthily in its every minute: their minds trained to their utmost capacity—everything, in fact, brought to symmetry and perfect melody—such is the dream of the young student. And the pathos is deepened in the case of a woman; for after all, little of the supreme realities of her life depend on all these heroic strivings, and on these things which she then regards as the supreme considerations of life. Her heart, her temperament, above all, the choice of her mate: these are the things which will make or mar her life, and not the gift to translate Virgil or master Euclid. And her fate as to these supreme issues is left to the dark guidance of childish ignorance.

To the knowledge of Latin, Jane Welsh in her girlhood added the knowledge of French and Italian. She filled the usual precedent of pre-

cocious characters in perpetrating a tragedy—happily not extant; and then, and afterwards, she showed some ability in pretty and tender versification.

V

WHEN she was just eighteen she met her first great sorrow—a sorrow greater than even she knew in all the blackness of her despair. Of her two parents, she loved her father the better; perhaps he was the worthier of love. All the memories of him are beautiful. He was very handsome; he was intellectual; the whole county believed in his skill as a physician, and loved him as a man. The mother was a beautiful woman; and even Carlyle, who did not love her, could but acknowledge that she always was clever; but she was wayward and domineering. One of her relatives said he had seen her in fifteen different humours in the course of a single evening. She and her daughter loved each other deeply, but could never get on well together.

The father, on the other hand, was adored by his daughter, and he returned the affection with interest. The extent of his practice, and the long distances of his district, compelled him to take many drives. It was on one of these drives that he had his last conversation of any length with his daughter. The conversation has been recorded by

the daughter's husband. It was full of the sage generalities with which the poor blind male parent seeks to penetrate the dark labyrinthine recesses of a young maid's mind. The great effect it had on the daughter was probably due to the fact that it was the first sign of confidence from the parent to the child—one of childhood's first and most delicious experiences. The next day he was down with malignant typhoid fever; after an illness of four days he died. If any one requires proof of the intensity either of Jane Welsh's affections or her power of description, he has only to read the touching letter in which she describes her sense of her first great sorrow.

But, as I have said, the loss was greater than even she could have imagined; for she was now left without the one friend who could direct her. And she was a girl who badly wanted guidance.

A fundamental fact in the tragedy of her life—as I read it—is that Mrs. Carlyle was of ardent imagination and of ardent senses rather than of tender heart; in other words, accepting the French distinction, that she was a *femme passionée* rather than a *femme sentimentale.* A woman of such a type is always in peril: she may be swept off her feet by some fancy, with no foundation worthier or more solid than the action on an ignorant and ardent temperament of a physically attractive man. A woman may be happy in a union that has so inauspicious a beginning by a lucky dip in

the lottery of marriage; or she may be saved from an awakening by a want of intelligence. But Jane Welsh had a keen intelligence as well as an ardent temperament; and the keenness was of just the kind to bring her emotions and her intelligence often into conflict. She had an essentially critical —it may even be said censorious—mind. Mrs. Ireland, her enthusiastic eulogist, admits she "was not apt to attribute lofty and beautiful motives to any one." Add that she had a tongue and a pen, biting, witty, and harsh, and you have a decidedly perilous combination. And add on top of that, that to her last day Mrs. Carlyle had all the love and admiration—at least so I am told—of a spoiled beauty; and you have a woman in all the multitudinous weaknesses of her sex, side by side with an intelligence and character of masculine strength.

VI

ALL these qualities are to be found in the study of her girlhood by herself. Her early letters are full of young men who have caught her fancy. A "Benjamin B——" has appeared to her "one of the most frank, unaffected young men I have seen." A year or two later she met him, but he is on the opposite bank of the river; and this is

the warm language in which she relates this incident—

> Let any human being conceive a more tantalizing situation! I saw him, I durst not make any effort to attract his attention, though, had my will been consulted in the matter, to have met him *eye to eye* and *soul to soul* I would have swam—ay, swam across at the risk of being dosed in water-gruel for a month to come! . . . Providence has surely some curious design respecting this youth and me! It was my birthday we parted—it was on my birthday we met, or (but for that confounded river) should have met again.

Years afterwards, the gentleman so enthusiastically described had become "the most disagreeable person on the planet."

A more serious affair was that with George Rennie. Rennie is familiar to the readers of the *Letters and Memoirs of Mrs. Carlyle* as "a clever, decisive, very ambitious, but quite unmelodious young fellow, whom we knew afterwards here (in Chelsea) as sculptor and M.P." But to young Janie Welsh, George Rennie was not so unmelodious. "Oh, wretch!" she writes of him at the time of his courtship of her, "I wish I could hate him, but I cannot. . . . And when Friday comes, I always think how neatly I used to be dressed, and sometimes I give my hair an additional brush and put on a clean frill, just from habit. Oh! the devil take him!"

And finally, when, perhaps, the "decisive" young man grew tired of Jenny Welsh's waywardness and indecision, she writes to a friend—"I had not

heard his voice for many a day, but then I had heard those who had conversed with him. I had seen objects he had looked on, I had breathed air he had breathed." And describing her leave-taking she says—"I scarcely heard a word he said, my own heart beat so loud." Years after, Mrs. Carlyle went, at the request of the other woman who had become Mrs. Rennie, to George Rennie's death-bed.

Finally, before going on to another affair—the most serious of them all next to her marriage with Carlyle—it is worth noting that at this period Jenny Welsh was a devoted admirer of Rousseau and of the characters in *La Nouvelle Héloise.* It was, perhaps, her spiritual intimacy with these heroes and heroines of fiction that helped her to despise her local lovers. She writes to a friend in 1822—

> No lover will Jane Welsh ever find like St. Preux, no husband like Wolmar! (I don't want to insinuate that I should like both), and to no man will she give her heart and pretty hand who bears to these no resemblance. George Rennie! James Aitken! Robert Macturk! James Baird! Robby Angus! O Lord! O Lord! Where is the St. Preux? Where is the Wolmar?

It is also characteristic of her bold and frank nature that she—an unmarried young Scotch-woman, be it remembered, of the early days of this century—was able to comment on Julie Étange, the heroine of Rousseau, that though she

"does not wish to countenance such irregularity among her female acquaintances," she declares that "were any individual of them to meet with *such a man*, to struggle as she struggled, to *yield* as she yielded, and to repent as she repented," she "would love that woman better than the chastest, coldest prude between John o' Groat's House and Land's End." Such views in one who had gone through the broadening and softening experiences of life and its complexities might be passed and even approved; in a young unmarried girl in a rustic village they mark a somewhat perilously inflamed imagination.

VII

EDWARD IRVING had become master of the school at Haddington when he was between seventeen and eighteen years of age. At this period he was a very tall, handsome, and winning young man. Dr. Welsh, anxious to give his brilliant daughter every chance of learning, asked Irving to give her private lessons in addition to those she received in the school. From the first, master and pupil took to each other; and later on, they loved each other. Irving saw the faults of Jane Welsh: and spoke to her of them with a boldness on which only a teacher could have ventured with so arrogant and caustic a young lady. He accused her of using in her "satire and scorn" the "arts of cruelty":

and he even made the cruel, biting rebuke that she seemed "to contemplate the infirmity of others rather from the point of view of ridicule and contempt than of commiseration and relief." The language is characteristically Scotch and ecclesiastical; but the meaning is clear enough. Irving meant to say that Jane Welsh was cynical and ill-natured. But he loved her—as it is so easy to do when the cruel-tongued minx is eighteen and brilliant and beautiful! And she loved him: and the disaster in which they both ended was begun and was prepared in this love of their early years.

Irving had become engaged to a Miss Martin before this passion for Jane Welsh had come. When he found out unmistakably the state of his heart, he summoned up courage to tell Miss Martin's father of the difficulty that had arisen: but father and daughter held Irving to his bond: and Irving and Jane Welsh had to separate. Whether, if they had married, the lot of either would have been happy, who can tell? But there are one or two things which one can say with some assurance. It is certain that Irving and Jane Welsh could not have done worse than they actually did. They were each driven into a loveless marriage: and whatever element may be wanting in a marriage, and yet allow it to be tolerable, the absence of love is nearly always disastrous with such natures as these two had.

It was certainly disastrous in their case. I don't know which of the two one must regard as having ended more calamitously — Irving's life-struggle and heart-weariness going out in mere insanity after the delirious ravings of popularity, preachings, and visions, or Jane Welsh's long heartache, finding relief and rest for the first time when the ache finally broke the heart.

VIII

IRVING had removed from Haddington to Kirkcaldy: but he still paid visits to the home of the woman he loved—hoping against hope—after the manner of all who love unhappily. Time, destiny, an earthquake, or an eclipse—heaven knows what —might yet intervene between him and advancing doom. It was, perhaps, when he had begun to abandon hope finally, that he brought to Jane Welsh a friend he had made in Edinburgh, whose genius and goodness he had been able to thus early discover, under the thickly-obscuring clouds of roughness, ill-health, and bleak and hopeless poverty. The friend was Thomas Carlyle. Jane Welsh at this moment, was fighting against her hopeless love after the fashion of her energetic nature. She hoped to find in literature a solace, perchance a career; was deep in books, and in new studies—above all, in the study of German.

"Oh! my beloved German! my precious, precious time," she writes to a friend. Later on, when under Carlyle's guidance and encouragement she is translating German, she writes of the occupation—"as busy at this as if my fortune in this world and my salvation in the world to come depended on my proficiency in that enchanting tongue."

Here was another bond with Carlyle. Everybody knows what he has done for the introduction of German literature to England, and that German was to him, in the first stage of his career, at once a fascinating study and a means of earning bread.

IX

It was on an evening in the last week of May 1821, that there took place that first interview between Carlyle and Jane Welsh which has now become one of the immortal episodes of literary history. We have an account of the evening by Carlyle himself—told after his matchless fashion. It should be said that the account begins by an inaccurate date—Carlyle places the interview in June, it was in May.

In June 1821 (he writes) Edward Irving, who was visiting and recruiting about Edinburgh, on one of his occasional holiday sallies from Glasgow, took me out to Haddington. We walked cheerily together, not always by the highway, but meandering at our will pleasantly and multifariously talking,

as has been explained elsewhere, and about sunset of the same day I first saw her who was to be so important to me thenceforth; a red dusky evening, the sky hanging huge and high, but dim as with dust or drought, over Irving and me, as we walked home to our lodgings at the George Inn. The visit lasted three or four days, and included Gilbert Burns and other figures, besides the one fair figure most of all important to me. We were often in her mother's house; sat talking to the two for hours almost every evening. The beautiful, bright, and earnest young lady was intent on literature as the highest aim in life, and felt imprisoned in the dull element which yielded her no commerce in mind, and would not even yield her books to read. I obtained permission to send at least books from Edinburgh.

X

IT is fanciful to read too much into a passage, written in retrospect over the interval of nearly fifty years; but somehow or other, I seem to find in this description a certain forecast and explanation of the coming tragedy. You mark that Carlyle remembered, after all that time, the sky which then hung over that eventful evening—"a red, dusky evening, the sky hanging huge and high." It is a revelation of his nature in more ways than one; but mainly in this: that it shows him to be the very converse of Jane Welsh. I have said that she was passionate and not sentimental: Carlyle I believe to have been sentimental and not passionate. His exaltations came from the imagination, and were not sensual. The

opulent hope that is inspired by a red sunrise, the divine peace that inundates the soul from a beautiful sunset, reach us through the avenues of the senses; but such enthusiasms belong usually to the temperaments in which tenderness and sensitiveness of the nerves shut out the robustness of ardent passion.

There are some passages in the self-revelations of Carlyle that should be read, I think, in connection with that I have just quoted. The first is a description of his boyhood in Ecclefechan.

> On fine days I was wont to carry forth my supper (bread-crumbs boiled in milk) and eat it out of doors. On the coping of the wall, which I could reach by climbing, my porringer was placed; there many a sunset have I, looking at the distant mountains, consumed, not without relish, my evening meal. Those hues of gold and azure, that hush of worldly expectation as day dies, were still a Hebrew speech for me: nevertheless I was looking at the fair, illumined letters, and had an eye for the gilding.

The second passage is still more a revelation of Carlyle's nature—at least as I read it. As is known, Carlyle had, previous to his meeting with Jane Welsh, passed through his first romance. Margaret Gordon—probably the vast inferior of poor Jane Welsh in intellect—had the more saving virtues in a woman of common-sense, insight into character, and a firm purpose. She had refused Carlyle, and her reasons, although stated with all tenderness and delicacy, showed that she had discovered the faults which wrecked Jane Welsh.

Miss Gordon was the original of Blumine in *Sartor Resartus;* and now I pause to extract the passages which describe what Carlyle understood by love; it is the passage which tells us what Teufelsdröckh felt towards Blumine.

The first describes an evening such as Carlyle might have spent with either Margaret Gordon or Jane Welsh—

The conversation took a higher tone, one fine thought called forth another; it was one of those rare seasons when the soul expands with full freedom, and man feels himself brought near to man. Gaily in light, graceful abandonment, the friendly talk played round that circle; for the burden was rolled from every heart; the barriers of ceremony, which are indeed the laws of polite living, had melted as into vapour; and the poor claims of Me and Thee, no longer parted by rigid fences, now flowed softly into one another, and life lay all harmonious, many-tinted, like some fair royal champaign, the sovereign and owner of which were love only. Such music springs from kind hearts, in a kind environment of place and time. And yet as the light grew more aërial on the mountain tops and the shadows fell longer over the valley, some faint tone of sadness may have breathed through the heart; and, in whispers more or less audible, reminded every one that as this bright day was drawing towards its close, so likewise must the Day of Man's Existence decline into dusk and darkness; and with all its sick toilings and joyful and mournful noises sink in the still Eternity.

To our Friend the hours seemed moments; holy was he and happy; the words from those sweetest lips came over him like dew on thirsty grass; all better feelings in his soul seemed to whisper, It is good for us to be here. At parting, the Blumine's hand was in his; in the balmy twilight, with the kind stars above them, he spoke something of meeting again, which was not contradicted; he pressed gently those small soft fingers, and it seemed as if they were not hastily, not angrily withdrawn.

There is another and a similar passage—

In free speech, earnest or gay, amid lambent glances, laughter, tears, and often with the inarticulate mystic speech of Music: such was the element they now lived in; in such a many-tinted aurora, and by this fairest of Orient light-bringers must our Friend be blandished, and the new Apocalypse of Nature unrolled to him. Fairest Blumine! And even as a star, all fire and humid softness, a very light-ray incarnate! Was there so much as a fault, a "caprice," he could have dispensed with? Was she not to him in very deed a morning star? did not her presence bring with it airs from Heaven? As from Æolian harps in the breath of dawn, as from the Memnon's statue struck by the rosy finger of Aurora, a weird, unearthly music was around him, and lapped him into untried balmy Rest! Pale Doubt fled away to the distance; Life bloomed up with happiness and hope. The past then was all a haggard dream; he had been in the Garden of Eden then, and could not discern it! But lo, now! the black walls of his prison melt away; the captive is alive, is free. If he loved his Disenchantress? Ach Gott! His whole heart and soul and life were hers, but never had he named it Love; existence was all a Feeling, not yet shaped into a Thought.

And finally, when the catastrophe comes, there is the following outburst—

One morning he found his morning star all dimmed and dusky red; the fair creature was silent, absent; she seemed to have been weeping. Alas! no longer a morning star, but a troublous skyey portent, announcing that the doomsday had dawned. She said in a tremulous voice, They were to meet no more. The thunderstruck Air-sailor is not wanting to himself in this dread hour: but what avails it? We omit the passionate expostulations, entreaties, indignations, since all was vain, and not even an explanation was conceded him; and hasten to the catastrophe. "Farewell then, Madam!" said he, not without sternness, for his stung pride helped him. She put her hand in his, she looked in his face, tears started to her eyes; in wild audacity he clasped her to

his bosom ; their lips were joined, their two souls like two dew-drops rushed into one—for the first time, and for the last! Thus was Teufelsdröckh made immortal by a kiss. And then? Why, then—thick curtains of Night rushed over his soul, as rose the immeasurable crash of Doom ; and through the ruins as of a shivered Universe was he falling, falling, towards the Abyss.

I have quoted these passages not to prove what is conceded, that the passion of love has an influence on men of genius and imagination, in some respects, at least, different from that which it exercises over men of more prosaic mould. It seems to produce a perfect ferment not so much of their passions as of their imaginations ; to give to their brains a marvellous brightness, fertility, and activity—a fact that perhaps will account for, and to some degree even extenuate, the extraordinary influence which men of the poetic and literary temperament have nearly always allowed women to exercise over their lives. My purpose is to enforce the opinion I have already expressed. The eloquence, beauty, tenderness of these passages are undeniable; indeed, there are few passages, even in the literature of love, their equal in eloquence, beauty, and tenderness. But what of passion? What of the ardent desire of possession? The love is beautiful, poetic, noble ; but it is spectral : it is the love of a sentimental dreamer, not of a robust man. There are many women—perhaps one might even say a large proportion of women—who would ask no other love from a man ; who would

be easy, happy, even honoured and exalted in such a love: but Jane Welsh was not one of those women.

XI

I HAVE given Carlyle's description of the impression which his first interview with Jane Welsh made upon him; we have also a record of the impression he made on her. She was undoubtedly impressed by Carlyle; Professor Masson in his Essays calls attention to the fact as very significant, that even in his days of blackest poverty and obscurity Carlyle tremendously impressed everybody—even the Blumine that loved and left him. But for the moment, Jane Welsh—the fastidious and genteel young lady, the heiress and social leader—was struck, or professed to be more struck, by Carlyle's plebeian uncouthness and physical disadvantages than by his intellectual powers. "He scrapes the fender," she wrote of this, to her, tragic meeting; "only his tongue should be left at liberty, his other members are most fantastically awkward." And besides, there was in the room on that evening all the subtle fascination of a love—passionate, hopeless, concealed—between Jane Welsh and Carlyle's companion. One can summon up in fancy a vision of ardent, tender, half-affrighted, half-daring exchange of looks between Irving and Jane Welsh. One can

imagine how, over and above the loud and brilliant talk of Carlyle, these two heard the music of their own beating hearts; and how Carlyle was but to them an accident and an excuse, in the delight of being once more in each other's sight. Neither then, nor ever after, did Carlyle understand all the hidden, volcanic, and destructive forces against which he played that memorable evening.

But as Professor Nichol says—"the poor mocking-bird had met her fate." In the end, we know that she was caught in the cage: that the cage covered imprisonment, torture, the eating out of her heart by the beak of her mate, and by her own as well; and the futile beating of her breast against the bars until it was finally rent. All this adds a pathos to the flutterings, terrors, flyings-away, which preceded final capture. The story has the horrible fascination of watching the dove pursued by the hawk. Indeed, have not most courtships between men and women in present conditions, and under our present social code, something that resembles the flight of the weak, the pursuit of the strong? And does not the final capture, with all the helpless and defenceless subjection which marriage imposes on the woman, suggest the trembling captive of the fiercer bird?

The following description, therefore, which Froude gives of the waywardness, the repulses, even the cruelty with which Jane Welsh met the

advances of Carlyle, I find woeful reading, as I think of how it all ended.

She had no thought of marrying him, but she was flattered by his attachment. It amused her to see the most remarkable person that she had ever met with at her feet. His birth and position seemed to secure her against the possibility of any closer connection between them. Thus he had a trying time of it. In serious moments she would tell him that their meeting had made an epoch in her history, and had influenced her character and life. When the humour changed, she would ridicule his Annandale accent, turned his passionate expressions to scorn, and when she had toned him down again she would smile once more, and enchant him back into illusions. She played with him, frightened him away, drew him back, quarrelled with him, received him again into favour, as the fancy took her, till the poor man said—"My private idea is that you are a witch like Sapphira in the New Testament, concerning whom Dr. Nimmo once preached in my hearing: 'It seems probable, my friend, that Ananias was tempted into this by some spirit more wicked than his wife.'"

But in the summer of 1823 "she was staying in some house which she partly disliked, and on this occasion, in a fit of impatience with her surroundings—for she dated a letter which she wrote to him then very characteristically as from 'Hell'—she expressed a gratitude for Carlyle's affection for her, more warm than she had ever expressed before": in other words, the mocking-bird was beginning to look at the cage. "Carlyle," says Froude, "believed her serious, and supposed she had promised to be his wife." But he was soon undeceived; for he got the following reply immediately—

My friend, I love you. I repeat it, though I find the expression a rash one. All the best feelings of my nature are concerned in loving you. But were you my brother I would love you the same. No, your friend I will be, your honest, most devoted friend, while I breathe the breath of life. But your wife, never, never—not though you were as rich as Crœsus, or honoured and renowned as you yet shall be.

Here, again, was warning sufficient to both the one or the other that they were not fit for each other. But our lives are the sport of anarchic circumstances; the overwhelming majority of us allow ourselves to drift; and thus it comes so often to pass—and perhaps especially in the making of marriages—that we are brought to the very course which our judgment most repels. Besides, a long period of indecision has the effect in the end of paralyzing the will; the mere fatigue of irresolution begets rash resolves.

In this courtship there also entered a factor which is accountable for the disastrous clinging to each other of so many men and women who were better apart. Long intimacy between a man and a woman produces a sense of personal proprietorship and of necessary companionship. The world is wide, and of scarcely two people can it be said with truth that they two, out of its teeming millions, are alone able to make each other happy. But there is always the fierce promptings of jealousy against the surrender of what one once has had; and the aching void and sense of desolation which the loss of a customary companionship produces in almost every

one of us, gives to parting an exaggerated horror. Add to this the latent desire to conquer in every male animal, and to hold, in every female, and you can understand why these two clung to each other, and almost consciously—in terror, in desperation, but with the relentless grip of the drowning—went together down the stream to Niagara.

XII

I HAVE read and re-read the letters which passed between the two at this period: they have the fascination which every authentic human document in a story of tragic marriage must always exercise. In addition, these letters are pictures of two intensely interesting, complex, gifted, and historic beings; and they are written with extraordinary literary skill. It would be wrong to describe them as love-letters—for, alas! the two people who wrote them were not in love with each other. But outside the immortal works of fiction, I don't know any correspondence which conveys so intense a sense of the currents and eddies of feeling by which men and women are tossed and mocked and undone. All the letters are set forth in full in Froude's story of Carlyle's early life in London, but to embody them here would enlarge this essay beyond the modest proportions which it is intended to reach. I must be satisfied with

giving an occasional extract here and there which will serve to bring out the relations between the two. Carlyle, during these years, had been employed as tutor to the young Bullers, and had paid the visit to London of which the world knows so much. The most intimate friend, of course, he found in London was Irving, who had already received his first call to Hatton Garden, and had already laid the foundation of that triumphant career of fashionable preaching which ended so disastrously. Carlyle, it must always be remembered, was unconscious until his wife's death, and perhaps was not wholly conscious even then, of the intense passion which had bound her and Irving together. It will, therefore, be understood what a charm the letters of Carlyle which dealt with Irving must have had for the woman whose heart still bled from the wound of her unhappy love! This letter, for instance, must have been especially delightful to her! Carlyle and Irving are at Dover together.

The orator is busy writing and bathing, persuading himself that he is scaling the very pinnacles of Christian sentiment, which in truth, with him, are very little more than the very pinnacles of human vanity rising through an atmosphere of great natural warmth and generosity. I find him much as he was before, and I suppose always will be, overspread with secret affections, secret to himself, but kind and friendly and speculative and discursive as ever. It would do your heart good to look at him in the character of dry nurse to his first-born, Edward. Oh, that you saw the Giant with his broad-brimmed hat, his sallow visage, and his sable, matted

fleece of hair; carrying the little pepper-box of a creature folded in his monstrous palms along the beach, tick tickling to it, and dandling it, and every time it stirs an eyelid grinning horribly a ghastly smile, heedless of the cries of petrified spectators that turn round in long trains, gazing in silent terror at the fatherly leviathan; you would laugh for twelve months after, every time you thought of it. And yet it is very wrong to laugh, if one could help it. Nature is very lovely: pity she should ever be absurd. On the whole I am pleased with Irving, and hope to love him and admire him and laugh at him as long as I live. There is a fund of sincerity in his life and character which in these heartless, aimless days is doubly precious. The cant of religion, conscious or unconscious, is a pitiable thing, but not the most pitiable.

The picture here presented to Jane Welsh of the man she loved, not merely as a husband, but as the father of a child by another woman, must have produced on her expressive face a look which, perhaps, had Carlyle been able to see and read it, might have given him warning of the future which he and she were preparing for each other!

XIII

An extract from another letter will show that, though dimly, Carlyle was already conscious of some of the perilous contradictions in the character of his future wife.

Do not (he says) mock and laugh, however gracefully, when you can help it. For your own sake I had almost rather see you sad. It is the earnest, affectionate, warm-hearted, enthusiastic Jane that I love. The acute, sarcastic,

clear-sighted, derisive Jane I can at least but admire. Is it not a pity that you had such a turn that way?

And now Carlyle made a proposition to Jane Welsh, which more than anything else showed his want of knowledge of her and himself, and his entire want of tact in dealing with her. His future, although it had had some successes, was still undetermined, but he had that desire for the country which is always inspired by dwelling in town, just as dwelling in the country inspires a hankering after the town, in one who was disposed to see the causes of his sufferings not in the sombreness of his own character, but in his physical maladies and in his surroundings. This was the year 1825, and he was now thirty years of age.

The proposal he made to Jane Welsh was that he should take a farm in Scotland. Jane Welsh was by no means attracted by any such project. She knew a good deal better than Carlyle what a Scotch farm involved. She knew Carlyle a good deal better than he did himself, and his utter unfitness for such an occupation; and above all things she knew how little she was fitted to be a farmer's wife. At first she treated the enterprise with her characteristic spirit of mockery; and in the same spirit made the remark that if she wanted a farm, she had one of her own at Craigenputtock; the tenant was leaving, and if he was bent on trying, let him try Craigenputtock. Craigenputtock had been left to her by her father. Poor Carlyle

took the joke quite seriously. Craigenputtock at once became a fixed idea, a glorious vision, a perfect solution of his difficulties and troubles. The correspondence which followed is a wonderful revelation of both the one and the other, and an explanation of much that followed afterwards. The letter of January 1825 (see Froude's *Carlyle's Early Life*, pp. 280—285, for the entire letter) is a most curious and pathetic instance of the self-deception which an imaginative man can practise on himself. Here is a man who, in spite of all he said to the contrary, was marked out by nature to be an author, declaiming against the profession of author as a degrading thing. Here is a man who would have been miserable in Paradise, discovering that all he wants to make him happy is open air and solitude; here is a man who ultimately was able to bend a woman to his will, to his purpose, and his habits with an unrelenting sternness that sometimes make one almost loathe him, declaring that no self-sacrifice is beyond the powers and limits of his unselfishness!

The reply of Jane Welsh has not the same splendour and glow as the letter of Carlyle, for she had neither his imagination, his vision, nor his lack of sense. But it is a very remarkable letter, nevertheless, both as a revelation of character and as a piece of literature. It is also a letter which marked out so plainly how little she was suited to be Carlyle's wife, as to increase one's

astonishment that neither of the two people, so intellectual otherwise, was able to read its inevitable interpretation. If there be one folly which is more dominant in the madness of the passion called love, it is that the loved person will be all-sufficing, and that the rest of the world must be regarded as superfluous and embarrassing. Hence the first craving of most people in the vigour of youth and passion is for solitude. Probably, as Froude suggests, if Edward Irving had made to Jane Welsh the proposition which was urged upon her by Carlyle—at all events if on the acceptance of that proposition depended either the loss or retention of Irving—she would not have hesitated to joyfully accept. But, as Froude remarks, "the indispensable feeling was absent," and not only was it absent, but she knew it was absent.

I love you, and I should be the most ungrateful and injudicious of mortals if I did not. But I am not *in love* with you; that is to say, my love for you is not a passion which overclouds my judgment and absorbs all my regards for myself and others. It is a simple, honest, serene affection, made up of admiration and sympathy; and better perhaps to found domestic enjoyment on than any other. In short, it is a love which *influences*, does not *make*, the destiny of a life.

XIV

"SUCH temperate sentiments," she goes on to say, truly enough, "lend no false colouring, no 'rosy light';" and she proceeds to show this very

effectively by discussing ways and means with a calmness—it would not be unfair to say, an indelicacy—which would be scarcely possible in any woman who was really in love. The frankness with which she spoke, showed her to be much more clear-sighted than the morbid visionary to whom she was writing.

The next letter of Carlyle is as interesting. It explains how the same vivid and ever-active imagination—which gave him the power, with almost eerie and fabulous second-sight, to transfer himself into a century-dead thing, and to get at the inside of a heart that had become silent dust for a succession of generations—it explains how the same vivid and active imagination was able also to magnify and to distort the realities of his own life. Here is a picture of the kind of vision that must have often given sleepless nights, full of affrighting horrors, to the poor dyspeptic genius—

> For these many months the voice of every persuasion in my conscience has been thundering to me as with the Trump of the Archangel. Man! thou art going to destruction. Thy nights and days are spent in torment! thy heart is wasting into entire bitterness. Thou art making less of life than the dog that sleeps upon thy hearth. Up, hapless mortal! Up and rebuild thy destiny if thou canst! Up in the name of God, that God who sent thee hither for other purposes than to wander to and fro, bearing the fire of hell in an unguilty bosom, to suffer in vain silence, and to die without ever having lived.

All these visions, he proceeds to explain, would be exorcised and for ever banished, if only the

woman he loved consented to exile herself to the solitude of a bleak, lonely farm! By and by, as we all know, he was able to wring from the wife the concession which was so emphatically refused by the woman who had not yet been bound in the chains of marriage; and we shall see how far Carlyle's anticipations of himself, of his love, and of life on a farm were realized with Jane Welsh.

Meantime, let me pass on to the remainder of this remarkable correspondence. Jane Welsh's next letter is even more emphatic in the repudiation of anything like the sentiment of love for Carlyle.

"I am prudent," she says; "I fear only because I am not strongly tempted to be otherwise," and then she proceeds—

My heart is capable (I feel it is) of a love to which no deprivation would be a sacrifice—a love which would overleap that reverence for opinion with which education and weakness have begirt my sex, would bear down all the restraints which *duty* and *expediency* might throw in the way, and carry every thought of my being impetuously along with it. But the all-perfect mortal who could inspire me with a love so extravagant is nowhere to be found; exists nowhere but in the romance of my own imagination. Perhaps it is better for me as it is. A passion like the torrent in the violence of its course might perhaps too, like the torrent, leave ruin and desolation behind. In the meantime, I should be mad to act as if from the influence of such a passion while my affections are in a state of perfect tranquillity. I have already explained to you the nature of my love for *you*: that it is deep and calm, more like the quiet river which refreshes and beautifies where it flows, than the torrent which bears down and destroys; yet it is materially different from what one feels for a statue or a picture.

And in another part of the same letter she speaks of a desire to "improve my sentiments."

I am not sure that they are proper sentiments for a husband. They are proper for a brother, a father, a guardian spirit; but a husband, it seems to me, should be dearer still. At the same time, from the change which my sentiments towards you have already undergone during the period of our acquaintance, I have little doubt but that in time I shall be perfectly satisfied with them.

Finally, in the closing letters of this episode, she takes up a serious tone and tries to laugh, but unfortunately she at the same time reveals to him the dangerous power he has over her.

How could I (she said) part from the only living soul that understands me? I would marry you to-morrow rather; our parting would need to be brought about by death or some dispensation of Providence. Were you to will it, to part would no longer be bitter. The bitterness would be thinking you unworthy.

Almost a whole library has been written to find the key to the sad mystery of Carlyle's and Mrs. Carlyle's unhappiness. To me it seems that all this speculation is far-fetched, when we have in these letters the entire, complete, and unmistakable key to the heart of the mystery. It is quite true that there are natures—unimaginative, robust, and placid—to whom passionate love is no essential of marriage. But it is a law of nature with those who are imaginative and ardent—and indeed with the vast mass of mankind—that marriage is only tolerable when it is entered by people who are

drawn to each other by the overwhelming force of all that mental, moral, and above all, physical attraction, one to the other, which we summarize in the word "love." The world is poisoned in its ethics, its legislation, in its millions of unhappy lives, by all the falsehood of sentiment, thought, and morality under which this fundamental truth of the pairing of man and woman is hidden; and quite recently the perhaps greatest novelist of his time—the Russian Tolstoi—has written a grim story, the main purpose of which is to fight against nature's law in this regard. The married life of Mrs. Carlyle is the best answer to the maleficent folly of *The Kreutzer Sonata.*

This case is being tried now, not in a court of divorce, but in a court of literature. Therefore one must avoid the coarse, almost brutish language in which women sometimes are compelled to demand separation from their husbands. Froude himself indicates as frankly as needs the real and fundamental reason of Mrs. Carlyle's unhappiness. "There is not a hint in any way that he had contemplated as a remote possibility the usual consequences of marriage, a family—and children." This passage needs no comments—for its meaning is plain: and I pass on.

XV

"MRS. CARLYLE," writes Froude, "said . . . that but for the unconscious action of a comparative stranger her engagement with Carlyle would probably never have been carried out." The incident which finally drove Jane Welsh into the arms of Carlyle is a singularly curious and interesting example of how unsuspected are the results when a person, ignorant of its structure and its nature, plays upon the human heart. As well expect that the water will not refract the stick you place in it as that the human heart will obey precisely the direction you wish it to go. Among the people of consequence whom Carlyle had met in London on his visit there was Mrs. Basil Montagu. Carlyle has caricatured her, but she seems to have been a well-meaning, kind-hearted, perilously sentimental woman. Mrs. Montagu was one of Irving's friends and admirers; and under the encouragement of her affection his afflicted heart overflowed, and he told the story of his unhappy love for Jane Welsh. The story naturally contained enthusiastic eulogies which the lover is always ready to bestow on the woman he has loved and lost. Mrs. Ireland blames Irving for this breach of the reticences, and, as it proved, it was a violation of another's confidence which brought disastrous results. But our poor

Irving was very human, and acted after the fashion of men.

Both Mrs. Montagu and Jane Welsh, on the other hand, acted after the fashion of women—though very different women. To Mrs. Montagu, Jane Welsh was a beautiful, attractive, high-minded young woman, eating out her heart in repining for a lover that had finally passed beyond her reach. With an innocent attempt at deception, Mrs. Montagu drew a picture of Irving very different from what he was or she thought him to be. He was inconstant, he was absorbed in himself, in his ambitions, in his multitudinous friends —in short, he wasn't worth a girl's breaking her heart for him.

Mrs. Montagu knew little of her sex in general, and least of all did she know this hard, proud, and distant specimen of it to whom she was writing, if she thought that such a letter could have any good results. Of all things which instinct, the traditions of centuries, pride, and, it may be added, self-interest, compel most women to conceal, it is an unhappy passion; and of all things they abhor and resent, it is pity over such a passion. Jane Welsh, instead of being free from these almost universal tendencies of her sex, was especially possessed by them. "It was not her habit," says Froude, who knew her so well, "to seek for sympathy from strangers"; and though Mrs. Montagu found her reply "extremely beautiful,"

we can imagine that it was not without a certain bitterness and resentment—not, perhaps, wholly intelligible to poor Mrs. Montagu's romantic eye.

The letter to Jane Welsh was indiscreet enough; but Mrs. Montagu had been guilty of a greater indiscretion. Ignorant of the closeness of the relations between Carlyle and Jane Welsh—regarding him simply as the good friend of both Irving and Jane Welsh, and believing that as such he knew all about the open secret of their unhappy hearts—Mrs. Montagu had written him at the same time a confidential letter, with the idea that he might also help in curing a love-sick maid from an impossible passion.

We see at once the critical, painful, disastrous situation which was created. Instead of knowing anything of the passion between Irving and Jane Welsh, Carlyle was entirely ignorant of it; instead of having unveiled the suffering, passionate, bruised heart which she carried within her breast, Jane Welsh had deliberately masked it. "For two years," says Froude, "she had never mentioned Irving to Carlyle except bitterly and contemptuously, so bitterly indeed that he had often been obliged to remonstrate." Carlyle knew too little of women to read in the exaggerated assaults the return blows of a jealous and bleeding heart. And now, here was Jane Welsh revealed to Carlyle as that poorest of things—a green-sick woman after another woman's husband, and as a wilful deceiver

of a man who had believed her a transparently truthful soul. And, finally, I should put it as one of the most potent factors in producing Jane Welsh's action at this decisive moment in her life, that she recoiled from the man—perchance loved and yet despised—who had betrayed her secret to another woman, and, indirectly, to another admirer. What devils of jealousy, scorn, vain regrets there were in the mind of Jane Welsh at this hour must have been increased sevenfold.

XVI

THE first thing, of course, which Jane Welsh had to do was, as Froude puts it, "to satisfy her ecstatic acquaintance that she was not pining for another woman's husband;" and the best way to do this was to tell Mrs. Montagu of her engagement to Carlyle. Thus Mrs. Montagu's intervention was bearing consequences so opposite to what the poor lady had anticipated, that she had, good soul, to begin all over again, and try an entirely different line. Of the engagement to Carlyle, she heard with as much horror as surprise; and shrinking back from the contemplation of a loveless marriage with one man as a result of a hapless love for another, Mrs. Montagu adjured Jane Welsh not to marry Carlyle. And to fortify the position she had to praise Irving, whom she had

dispraised, to declare that possible which she felt bound to denounce as impossible. Irving might one day be free; could Jane Welsh say that if he were she would still marry Carlyle? and if she could not, what right had she to do so?

Then came another and an equally curious instance of the unlooked-for consequences of certain facts in complex natures. Jane Welsh had much of hardness in her, and more as time went on, and after a hideous marriage had brought its terrible Nemesis; but I find her infinitely touching at this moment in her life; and in nothing so much as in the self-abasement to which she bent her proud and resolute spirit. She felt that she had been uncandid, if not untruthful, to Carlyle; and, enclosing this letter of Mrs. Montagu in one of her own, she fell, prone and humble, before him.

She had told him that she had never cared for Irving. It was false, she now said. She had loved him once—yes, she had loved him "passionately." "Passionately"—there is much significance in the word! And the use of it by Jane Welsh—though perchance she did not know its full import—is one of the things which have led me to the conclusion that with Irving, whether she would have been happy or not, she would never have sunk to the abyss of misery to which she descended with Carlyle. Passion—that tremendous factor in the union of a man and woman—was absent from the marriage of Carlyle and his wife. Between them

there was not this potent tie—potent to bind, to soften, to reconcile. The hold which Irving had over Jane Welsh was revealed and summarized in that single word in her letter; and if Carlyle or she had known themselves or human nature, the use of that one word would have been the epitaph of their engagement.

But neither knew the world: and, again, the effect of Jane Welsh's letter was the contradictory of what she had expected. Her self-abasement, instead of producing a triumphant retort from Carlyle, and a cry of joyous capture, brought to him a new birth of all the affrighting visions which had haunted him throughout the engagement. Mrs. Montagu was right: Jane Welsh was marrying him out of the infinite tenderness of her gentle heart for a poor wretch whose infirmities, bodily and mental, made him an unfit companion for any woman. He knew he could never make her happy. And then came one of those splendid bursts of mournful eloquence on the futility and sadness of human life, of which his pen was more capable than almost any since the days of the Hebrew psalmists. "No affection"—as Froude summarizes the outburst—"was unalterable or eternal." "Men themselves, with all their passions, sank to the dust and were consumed." And then there came a pathetic avowal of his own failings, and above all, of that "strange dark humour in him over which he had no control."

Again, in this tragi-comedy of errors, a letter had the opposite effect to that which it asked—or perhaps I should say, seemed to ask; for possibly Carlyle, after the fashion of despondent lovers, would have been shocked and wounded if the prayer he so passionately uttered had been granted. This humble, suffering, self-distrustful man—how could he fail to appeal to an inexperienced and not heartless woman, of whose life he had been for so many years an integral part? Besides, how could any woman any longer continue in a position so false and undignified? The avowal of her engagement by Jane Welsh involved its fulfilment. In any case, this maddening uncertainty must come to an end. Jane Welsh and Carlyle resolved to see each other; to fight with his black humours, and with his wavering and despondent soul: at all events, to have it out once and for ever. The visit was paid, and the marriage was resolved upon. It was thus that poor Mrs. Montagu's intervention had worked!

XVII

BUT even yet the marriage did not take place, and there is more letter-writing, more interminable discussion; plans vary from day to day; there are moments when there is sweet concord, and moments

of almost angry estrangement; and finally, as the hour of actual marriage approaches, there are out-cries of terror, which seem more like a preparation for the scaffold than for the altar.

Here is an extract from a letter from Jane Welsh which is well worth study—

I am resolved in spirit and even joyful—joyful in face of the dreadful ceremony, and starvation, and of every horrible fate.

I pause for a moment to note the language in which the woman speaks of what is usually an hour of rapturous expectation to those in love. "The dreadful ceremony," "starvation," "horrible fate"—these are the images which the coming of her marriage-day suggests to Jane Welsh!

The passage which follows is even more important—

Oh! my dearest friend, be always good to me, and I shall make the best and happiest wife. When I read in your looks and words that you love me, then I care not one straw for the whole universe besides. But when you fly from me to smoke tobacco, or speak of me as a mere circumstance of your lot, then indeed my heart is troubled about many things.

Has ever a more touching letter been written? ever a letter which bore so distinct a mark of womanhood? That eternal cry for affection, for tenderness, for recognition is there, which is the note of almost all women alive—the strongest as the weakest—the touch of nature that makes them all kin. If Carlyle had been able to appreciate the depth of feeling, the abyss of yearning from

which there issued this almost desperate cry and appeal, his life and his wife's would have been a very different thing. For Carlyle never understood the needs of his wife until it was too late. It is true that even if he had, the indiscipline of his temper, its tyranny over himself as over others, and his selfishness, would have made him incapable of giving to his wife the tenderness, the attention, the self-sacrifice she craved. But my reading of this story is that Carlyle's destruction of this woman came from want of observation and want of understanding as much—if not more—than from want of feeling.

There is one last letter of hers before her marriage which I must quote—

> Oh! (she wrote) for Heaven's sake get into a more benignant humour, or the incident will not only wear a very original aspect, but likewise a very heart-breaking one. I see not how I am to go through with it.

And it is in this letter that she made use of the curious expression as to Carlyle, "I have found a second *father*"—a phrase which signifies much.

As to Carlyle, never was he so trying as in the last few weeks before the marriage. All the fantastic terrors which even his vivid and morbid imagination could summon up, appeared in his letters; and, when these were dealt with, he made a number of proposals as to the wedding-day which suggest a panic-stricken horror of being left alone with his new wife that would be laughable if it

were not tragic. They were to drive from the house of Jane Welsh's uncle near Haddington to the house in Comely Bank, in Edinburgh, where they were to live. Carlyle's first proposition was that they should make the journey in the public coach. Then, when this plan was rejected, he asked that his brother John should accompany them. Anything but solitude—the solitude which is the first craving of those who love! When the better and more delicate sense, and the robuster spirit of the woman, rejected these two proposals, Carlyle made a solemn demand that he should be allowed to smoke three cigars—"without criticism and reluctance, as things essential to my perfect contentment."

And, thus warned by the loud protests of their own hearts, pursued by spectres, affrighted, but no longer masters of themselves, these two were married on October 17, 1826: and Jane Welsh's long martyrdom began. She had put the iron collar of servitude around her neck, and gradually, but surely, it gripped and tightened and finally choked.

XVIII

AN American man once told me a story of his life which haunted me in a curious way for years afterwards. In the first year after his marriage, when he and his wife were both young, active, and

happy, they were coming home in the early morning from a dance; in the exuberance of her strength and joy the woman scorned to walk along the road, and went through the green fields to their home, chattering, singing, dancing as she passed. The fields were wet after the heavy rainfall; and at that moment she was sowing, in all her system, the seeds of a chronic rheumatism which for ever after held her, tortured her, and in the end killed her. I reconstructed the whole scene on that bright summer morning hundreds of times, until it had almost come to be like a personal experience in my own life; it was the contrast between the joyous opening and the long hell which came after to the fair and bright young creature which had caught my imagination.

I have something of the same feeling as I read the description of the life of Jane Welsh Carlyle at Craigenputtock; for there one can see the beginning—unconscious and unobserved—of the mental misery and physical pain which possessed Mrs. Carlyle from that time forward. The sadness and the horror of the story are only increased by the fact that the person who was mainly responsible for it all was an unconscious, in some degree even an innocent, agent; that he loved, constantly and tenderly, the woman whose soul and body he wrecked; and that he reaped, in years of lonely and haunted remorse, a harvest of woe almost as abundant as that of his slave and his victim.

The first few months of life at Comely Bank may be passed over lightly. On the whole they were happy; though even thus early there were indications of the coming storms. One of the first wounds to a woman's tenderness and need of approval which husbands give, is indifference to the little accomplishments for which such insincere admiration had been expressed in courtship; and poor Mrs. Carlyle was not long before she had this, as well as the other disagreeable awakenings of married life. Thus to her mother-in-law she writes—the tone is playful, but there is an under-current of seriousness—"There is a piano, too, 'for soothing the savage breast,' when one cares for its charms; but I am sorry to say that neither my playing nor my singing seem to give Mr. C. much delight." Even in these first hours of their joint lives, too, Carlyle had begun to create that separation which was one of Mrs. Carlyle's greatest grievances. He did not see her from breakfast till four p.m.; was alone at his work, in his walks, in his talk, in his bed-chamber. But, on the other hand, there were many acts of attention and kindness, in the Comely Bank period, which form a brighter picture of Carlyle as a husband than at any other period of his married life—until towards its end.

It was when the Craigenputtock project was carried out that the real horrors of solitude, broken only by Carlyle's fitful, silent, and sometimes

morose companionship, came upon Mrs. Carlyle. The reader has seen with what resolution and sense Jane Welsh had rejected the idea of living in Craigenputtock; but Jane Welsh was now Mrs. Carlyle, and no longer a free agent. She, who had declared that she would not consent to live in Craigenputtock "with an angel," was now compelled to go there with a dyspeptic, lonely, and selfish visionary. "To her it was a great sacrifice," wrote Carlyle, "and to me it was the reverse; but at no moment, even by a look, did she ever say so." How great the sacrifice was, Carlyle never knew till too late.

Professor Nichol, with characteristic patriotism, objects to Froude's description of Craigenputtock, as exaggerated; but even granting his deductions, Froude's picture is substantially correct. It is, Froude writes, "the dreariest spot in all the British dominions."

> The nearest cottage is more than a mile from it: the elevation seven hundred feet above the sea, stunting the trees and limiting the garden produce to the hardiest vegetables. The house is gaunt and hungry-looking. It stands with the scanty fields attached as an island in a sea of morass. The landscape is unredeemed either by grace or grandeur, mere undulating hills of grass and heather, with peat-bogs in the hollows between them. The belts of firs which now relieve the eye and furnish some kind of shelter were scarcely planted when the Carlyles were in possession. No wonder Mrs. Carlyle shuddered at the thought of making her home in so stern a solitude.

In addition, the winters were both long and

terrible; snow made access difficult, almost impossible at times; and at all seasons the stretch of fifteen miles lay—long, bleak, and dreary—between Craigenputtock and the nearest town, the post-office, and the doctor.

Remember the ideas with which Jane Welsh had married. She herself said afterwards—"I married for ambition." She had doubtless had her visions herself of literary greatness and social distinction in a great centre. She had quite enough of vanity to suggest, and quite enough of brilliancy to justify her in following the uniform method of day-dreams, and in making herself a central figure in the triumphant picture. She was to the end a talker as brilliant almost as Carlyle himself; to the end she loved admiration. She had been a serious student; was, perhaps, conscious of what brilliancy lay latent in her pen, and perchance had literary ambitions as keen as those of Carlyle himself. Above all things, she had expected literary companionship and watchful tenderness from Carlyle. In that pathetic little letter just before their marriage which I have already quoted, she had begged Carlyle to treat her so that she might feel that she was really somebody and something in his life and in the life of the world. In other words, this woman of strong, intense, brilliant individuality asked that her individuality might be a little respected and a little considered. And how had Carlyle fulfilled the bond?

In Comely Bank she proved that she could be a brilliant and attractive hostess; in Cheyne Row, later, she was able to prove this still more incontestably, and yet here she was condemned to live in a gaunt farm-house, fifteen miles from even the outposts of civilization! Nor was this all. If Carlyle had been only to her in marriage a little more what he was in courtship, she might have found the solitude more tolerable; but Carlyle made the solitude more lonely, the desolation more desolate. She rarely saw him; and when she did, she found herself at the side of a depressed, silent, gloomy, exacting, and now and then impatient and tempestuous man. And worse than all, Carlyle ceased to be respected by his wife; he had come to be regarded by her as a terribly selfish man; and his warmest admirers are compelled to admit that his wife had too abundant reason for the opinion. Froude has to admit it over and over again. "If," Froude writes, "matters went well with himself, it never occurred to him that they could be going ill with anyone else; and, on the other hand, if he was uncomfortable, he required everybody to be uncomfortable along with him." Mrs. Carlyle scornfully remarked that no one could have a more Christian resignation to the sufferings of others. An even stronger and bitterer comment was—"If Carlyle wakes once in a night he will complain of it for a week. I wake thirty times every night, but that is nothing."

And the implied boast is justified. Carlyle was a loud and insistent grumbler and complainer from his earliest days. His correspondence is a long whine over his ills, real or imaginary. On the other hand, Mrs. Carlyle is confessed by all to have borne her sufferings with a stern and inflexible reticence worthy of a Red Indian at the stake. And the contrast is further marked and saddened by the fact that it was the woman who had the real sufferings, and not the man. He wrote while still a young man that he was "immured in a rotten carcase, every avenue of which is changed into an inlet of pain." But the "rotten carcase" managed to carry him safely and, on the whole, soundly to eighty-six years. His wife, on the other hand—of whom, until almost the very end of her days, he never seemed to dream as ever having had an hour of real weakness and of pain—was delicate from girlhood: became an invalid—an invalid in mind and in body too—within a few years after her marriage; had for some years spells of positive torture; and finally, died suddenly of the sheer exhaustion of her bitterly-tried heart.

XIX

It was at Craigenputtock that the seeds of her ailments and subsequent suffering were sown. Mrs. Carlyle had a weak chest, a highly-sensitive nervous

organization, and had been reared in the delicate helplessness of a young lady of fortune. In Craigenputtock she could only keep one servant; and as Carlyle was fiercely particular as to his food, and all his domestic surroundings, she had all at once to become a domestic drudge. She had to bake the bread; for his weak digestion and delicate palate could not stand any but what she had made with her own hands. She had to see to the cooking of every meal: if a plate were not well washed she had to wash it herself; she had, now and then, to milk the cows; she had even to polish the grates and to scour the floors. If any man thinks that all these tasks are only what a wife should be expected to do, let him try his own hand at one of the physical and menial occupations which all his life he has had done for him by others: and he has the strength of a man, and poor Mrs. Carlyle had only the weakness of a delicate woman. It would make the world so much easier and better for women, if men were only able now and then to put themselves in their places!

I do not want to speak disrespectfully of poor Carlyle; but in spirit it is somewhat hard to keep one's hand off him, as we reconstitute those scenes in the gaunt house at Craigenputtock. There is a little detail in one scene which adds a deeper horror. I have said that Mrs. Carlyle had to scrub the floors; and as she scrubbed them, Carlyle would look on smoking,—drawing in from

tobacco pleasant comfortableness and easy dreams —while his poor drudge panted and sighed over the hard work, which she had never done before. Do you not feel that you would like to break the pipe in his mouth, to shake him off the chair, and pitch him on to the floor, to take a share of the physical burden which his shoulders were so much better able to bear?

There is an authentic document from this period which is one of the most painful and interesting in the whole story. It has been often quoted, and it is familiar to every student of this tragic marriage; but I cannot think that even a brief essay would be complete without its reproduction. I have said that Carlyle would eat no bread which had not been cooked by Mrs. Carlyle herself. Thirty years after the life at Craigenputtock, Mrs. Carlyle, writing to Miss Smith of Carlisle, told the story of her first experience in bread-making in the following letter—

So many talents are wasted, so many enthusiasms turned to smoke, so many lives spoilt for want of a little patience and endurance, for want of understanding and laying to heart what you have so well expressed in your verses—the meaning of the Present—for want of recognizing that it is not the greatness or littleness of "the duty nearest hand," but the spirit in which one does it, that makes one's doing noble or mean. I can't think how people who have any natural ambition and any sense of power in them escape going mad in a world like this without the recognition of that. I know I was very near mad when I found it out for myself (as one has to find out for oneself everything that is to be of any real practical use to one).

Shall I tell you how it came into my head? Perhaps it may be of comfort to you in similar moments of fatigue and disgust. I had gone with my husband to live on a little estate of peat-bog that had descended to me all the way down from John Welsh the Covenanter, who married a daughter of John Knox. That didn't, I am ashamed to say, make me feel Craigenputtock a whit less of a peat-bog, and a most dreary, untoward place to live at. In fact, it was sixteen miles distant on every side from all the conveniences of life, shops, and even post-office. Further, we were very poor, and further and worst, being an only child, and brought up to "great prospects," I was sublimely ignorant of every branch of useful knowledge, though a capital Latin scholar and very fair mathematician! It behoved me in these astonishing circumstances to learn to sew! Husbands, I was shocked to find, wore their stockings into holes, and were always losing buttons, and I was expected to "look to all that"; also it behoved me to learn to cook! no capable servant choosing to live at such an out-of-the-way place, and my husband having bad digestion, which complicated my difficulties dreadfully. The bread, above all, brought from Dumfries "soured on his stomach" (oh, Heaven!), and it was plainly my duty as a Christian wife to bake at home. So I sent for Cobbett's *Cottage Economy*, and fell to work at a loaf of bread. But knowing nothing about the process of fermentation or the heat of ovens, it came to pass that my loaf got put into the oven at the time that myself ought to have been put into bed; and I remained the only person not asleep in a house in the middle of a desert. One o'clock struck, and then two, and then three; and still I was sitting there in an immense solitude, my whole body aching with weariness, my heart aching with a sense of forlornness and degradation that I, who had been so petted at home, whose comfort had been studied by everybody in the house, who had never been required to do anything but cultivate my mind, should have to pass all those hours of the night in watching a loaf of bread—which mightn't turn out bread after all! Such thoughts maddened me, till I laid down my head on the table and sobbed aloud. It was then that somehow the idea of Benvenuto Cellini sitting up all night

watching his Perseus in the furnace came into my head, and suddenly I asked myself: "After all, in the sight of the Upper Powers, what is the mighty difference between a statue of Perseus and a loaf of bread, so that each be the thing one's hand has found to do?" The man's determined will, his energy, his patience, his resource, were the really admirable things, of which his statue of Perseus was the mere chance expression. If he had been a woman living at Craigenputtock, with a dyspeptic husband, sixteen miles from a baker, and he a bad one, all these same qualities would have come out more fitly in a good loaf of bread.

I cannot express what consolation this germ of an idea spread over my uncongenial life during the years we lived at that savage place, where my two immediate predecessors had gone mad, and the third had taken to drink.

I do not pause to dwell on all the tragic notes of suffering, passion, despair, which are to be read into this description; anybody who cannot feel all its sad and fierce pulsation must have a singularly poor and unsympathetic imagination. The one remark it is necessary for me to make is that the letter is a fine piece of literature: and one of the abounding proofs that a great writer was lost in Mrs. Carlyle.

XX

THE toil, the solitude, the moroseness, and silence of Carlyle, and the inclemency of the climate, soon began to do their work. In the first year of Craigenputtock the old Jane Welsh died, and a new one was born. There could be fewer beings more dissimilar than the Jane Welsh

whom Haddington knew, and the Mrs. Carlyle from this time onwards. Carlyle himself has told us that she had a bright, glad laugh; she has proved to the reader already the vivacity and joyfulness of her spirit, and, under all her hardness, there are many indications that she had a world of tenderness, if only there were some person to bring it forth. But the gaiety had now all gone; the strength of courage and will were there, but they were given, not in the sweet service of love, but as the broken-spirited slave's payment of expected toll; and the tenderness had turned to a bitter-hearted and bitter-tongued cynicism. "She took refuge," says Froude, "in a kind of stoicism, which was but a thin disguise for disappointment, and at times for misery." And above all things she began to develop all those nervous horrors by which outraged Nature is accustomed to wreak her vengeance for disobedience of her laws. Marriage had not brought to the wife the satisfaction of either soul or heart or body. It was without reverence or affection or the intimate physical communion which is to marriage, not its assoiling, but its sanctification.

Now and again there was a danger-signal, which only a man as blind and as selfish as Carlyle could have misunderstood. In the second winter there was an episode, which Froude thus describes—

All went well till the close of December; a fat goose had been killed for the New Year's feast; when the snow fell and

the frost came, and she caught a violent sore throat, which threatened to end in diphtheria. There was no doctor nearer than Dumfries, and the road from the valley was hardly passable. Mrs. Welsh struggled up from Templand through the snow-drifts; care and nursing kept the enemy off, and the immediate danger in a few days was over; but the shock had left behind it a sense of insecurity, and the unsuitableness of such a home for so frail a frame became more than ever apparent.

XXI

RAWDON said she should not join in any more such amusements; but, indeed, and perhaps from hints from his elder brother and sister, he had already become a very watchful and exemplary domestic character. He left off clubs and billiards. He never left home. He took Becky out to drive: he went laboriously with her to all her parties. Whenever my Lord Steyne called, he was sure to find the Colonel. And when Becky proposed to go without her husband, or received invitations for herself, he peremptorily ordered her to refuse them; and there was that in the gentleman's manner which enforced obedience. Little Becky, to do her justice, was charmed with Rawdon's gallantry. If he was surly, she never was. Whether friends were present or absent, she had always a kind smile for him, and was attentive to his pleasures and his comfort. It was the early days of their marriage over again: the same good-humour, *prévenances*, merriment, and artless confidence and regard. "How much pleasanter it all is," she would say, "to have you by my side in the carriage than that foolish old Briggs! Let us always go on so, dear Rawdon. How nice it would be, and how happy we should always be, if we had but the money!" He fell asleep after dinner in his chair: he did not see the face opposite to him, haggard, weary, and terrible. It lighted up with fresh candid smiles when he woke, it kissed him gaily.

It was more than a quarter of a century since I had read that passage, when I had got to this point in my narrative of the married life of Carlyle and his wife; and it came back to me vividly as though I had read it but yesterday. You remember where it occurs: it is in the epoch in the married life of Rawdon Crawley and Becky Sharpe just before the final separation between the two, and the bankruptcy of all Becky's hopes, ambitions, dreams, and lies. The picture somehow or other returned to me as I dwelt on that strange interior in Craigenputtock. Try to picture to yourself what it must have been like. The woman has all those hours of dreadful loneliness to pass through—with nothing to feed on except her own morbid fancies, her pent-up wrath, her awful disillusion. It will be seen by and by that she was in a state of constant mental tumult, of angry, vengeful, disgusted revolt; but all the time she had schooled herself to silence—perchance to smiles and external sweetness; and to all the other arts of mendacity or heroic self-repression or shrinking dread of outbursts of male temper, to which the long subjection of women has trained the whole race. And Carlyle comes down from his study, or from his long walks or rides over the bleak moor, silent, absorbed, repellent; surrounded by an atmosphere of isolation and distance, ready to resent any approach to tenderness or caresses, or often even to speech. And all the

time, if he had not been unconscious with the blindness of his selfishness, his self-absorption, and his want of observation, he might also have seen beside him at table a face not unlike that of Becky Sharpe—"haggard, weary, and terrible" as hers was. In how many apparently tranquil households is such a picture—all unknown to its head; under how many soft looks, and caresses, and smiling compliance there is raging a volcanic sense of wrong, of neglect, of disappointment!

We shall see presently, that if this strange pair were silent to each other, if neither knew anything of what was passing in the other's soul, it was not that they were inarticulate or reticent. Picture Carlyle going back to his Journal, and recording, as he often did, that he was "the solitariest, stranded, most helpless creature"! And listen later to all the bitterness and sadness which overflowed from those silent and compressed lips of his wife, from that figure, "haggard, weary, and terrible," when Mrs. Carlyle wrote to other people: and then ask yourself if there were not within the narrow walls of that small, gaunt, desolate house in Craigenputtock one of those fierce, tragic, and even perilous dramas which end in the dock and on the scaffold among people of a lower grade, where such fierce passions rage under bosoms not disciplined by education and inherited self-control to abstention from brutish violence.

And now, in order that the picture may be fair between the two, look at Carlyle with some approach to sympathy, as he sits beside the woman he is teaching to hate him. Those beautiful, brilliant eyes of his, "of a deep violet," writes Froude, "with fire burning at the bottom of them, which flashed out at the least excitement"—which strike and haunt everybody who ever sees them—are unable to see the face of his wife, to read the suffering or the growing estrangement in her face; but if they cannot see what is near and immediately in front—remember what they have seen. They have looked out on this black morass; and under the inspiration of its drear and eloquent solitude, of its sunsets and sunrises, have beheld visions by which the opulence of literature and the enjoyment of every succeeding generation have been increased beyond price and beyond gratitude. It is during these years that Carlyle has seen the visions that are found in *Sartor Resartus;* has lived with Marie Antoinette, Mirabeau, Danton; has marched beside the women on the road to Versailles; has followed Robespierre to the scaffold; and has lived through all the other scenes in that wondrous panorama of the French Revolution. These eyes have therefore all the rich light of the visionary—the dreamer of great dreams—of the tortured genius, whose throes supply the illumination and the joy of many generations of men. Selfish—brutally selfish—Carlyle

at Craigenputtock undoubtedly was; and no one can extenuate his conduct. But if he had had the good fortune to have been mated with some robust country girl, whose highest delight was to minister to his bodily wants in silence; who would have found in Craigenputtock no labour to which she had been unaccustomed; who could penetrate through the thick silence, and see only the brilliancy of those eyes, filled with the raptures and the terrors of his waking dreams and visions—then indeed it would have been better for him and better for her; and best of all for the nervous, delicate, brilliant, exacting woman who had been tied by a cruel destiny to the fiery wheel of such a marriage.

XXII

ON-LOOKERS were able to appreciate some of the too palpable horrors of the situation. To them Mrs. Carlyle ventured to throw off the mask, and to show the face, "haggard, weary, and terrible," which she always carefully concealed from Carlyle. Of these on-lookers the kindest, tenderest, and most persistent was Jeffrey. I have always had a certain dislike for Jeffrey, as a representative of that narrow, malignant school of criticism which did so much to repress the genius and spoil the early years of the finest spirits at the beginning of this century. But his conduct

to Carlyle and his wife is enough to make any one love him. Though Jeffrey finally estranged Carlyle, it was not that he was not full of consideration and tact. It is quite true that he had not understood Carlyle, and that, as he himself afterwards freely confessed, he had underrated Carlyle; but his advice as to Craigenputtock and Mrs. Carlyle was sound.

In October 1828 Jeffrey with his wife and daughter paid a rather sudden visit to Craigenputtock. It helps one to form some idea of what life was in the place, to learn that Mrs. Carlyle had to do "thirty good miles of swift canter," as Carlyle puts it, between Craigenputtock and Dumfries, to find the things necessary for the entertainment of the visitors. It was after this visit that Jeffrey wrote to Carlyle the following letter, which most other men would have been quick to rightly interpret—

> Take care of the fair creature who has trusted herself so entirely to you. Do not let her ride about in the wet or expose herself to the wintry winds that will by and by visit your lofty retreat; and think seriously of taking shelter in Moray Place [Jeffrey's house in Edinburgh] for a month or two; and in the meantime be gay and playful and foolish with her, at least as often as you reprove her to be wise and heroic with you. You have no mission upon earth, whatever you may fancy, half so important as to be innocently happy.

Some two years later, Jeffrey returned to the charge. He besought Carlyle "to bring his blooming Eve out of his blasted paradise," and

"seek shelter in the lower world." Before her he spread an invitation to a house where she would see, instead of the peat morasses of Craigenputtock, "roses and a blue sea, and broad shadows stretching over the fields." There was a second visit; more confidences between Jeffrey and Mrs. Carlyle; and, doubtless, more remonstrances to the deaf and sullen ears of Carlyle. And so it went on, from 1827 to 1834, through six terrible winters, through six years, scarce a moment of which was with Mrs. Carlyle free from bitterness, weariness, despair.

XXIII

WHEN at last the end came, it came too late: Mrs. Carlyle's power to live, to enjoy, and to love had been destroyed. She had, it is true, a talent for complaining, a very vivid imagination, and a very vivid pen; but the evidence is to my mind incontestable that her misery was real and was terrible. How fearful was the strain upon her becomes painfully apparent by an incident which occurred when the moment arrived for the ending of it all. When Carlyle in 1831 was paying his experimental visit to London, she was so anxious to hear from him that she used to ride all the way to Dumfries and back so as to anticipate the postman: it was the feverish restlessness of the prisoner in the last days that preceded her tardy release,

And then she came back to the lonely house, where the solitude crushes her, excites her feverish imagination—"often for hours," she cries, "the only sound the sheep nibbling the short grass a quarter of a mile away."

To Carlyle's mother, who had sent Jean and Alick Carlyle to keep her from going mad, she exclaims in hysteric relief—"I must soon have worked myself into a fever or other violent disorder; for my talent for fancying things . . . had so entirely got the upper hand of me, that I could neither sleep by night nor rest by day." It was at this same period that she wrote the well-known *Lines to the Swallow*, for which I must send the reader to Froude.

As the migration seems to become uncertain, she again bursts out with wailings. "Does your uncle," she writes to Mrs. Stodart in October 1832, "ever make the smallest mention of me? Ever inquire if the mischievous creature who broke his 'folder' is still working devilry in this planet? Alas, no! she is sober enough now; a long succession of bad days and sleepless nights have effectually tamed her. Oh, Bess, for one good laugh with you, for the sake of the old time!" To John Carlyle, her husband's brother, she excuses herself for delay in answering a letter with the words—"In truth I am always so sick now and so heartless that I cannot apply myself to any mental effort without a push from Necessity."

And finally, when the news of final release had come, it brought no joy. To John Carlyle she writes again—

I almost wish that I felt more anxiety about our future; for this composure is not courage, but *diseased indifference* There is a sort of incrustation about the inward *me*, that renders it alike miserable to fear and to hope.

And it is thus she speaks of emigrating from the hideous solitude of Craigenputtock to that city of crowds, of men and women of genius, of society, of admirers—of all these things which had been the dream and the ambition of her early days!

But perhaps the best description of the change that Craigenputtock had made in Jane Welsh is that of her old nurse. I close this part of the story with it, as the fitting epitaph on the tomb of a woman's happiness—

Ah, when she was young she was a fleein', dancin', light-heartit thing, Jeannie Welsh, that naething would have daunted. But she grew grave a' at once. There was Maister Irving, ye ken, that had been her teacher; and he cam' aboot her. Then there was Maister ——. Then there was Maister Carlyle himself, and he cam' to finish her off like.

XXIV

I FEEL I have dwelt at disproportionate length on the earlier years of the life of Carlyle and his wife: I shall be compelled in consequence to deal more briefly and in rather a hurried and huddled

fashion with the remainder of their existence together. There is this justification, however, for the disproportion—that it was at Craigenputtock the foundations of all their subsequent days together were laid; that the habits, the reserve, the disillusions which tortured Mrs. Carlyle throughout the rest of her life, began there; that the terms between her and her husband entered into that stereotyped form of daily habits which it is so difficult ever to change.

There was every reason why Mrs. Carlyle should have hoped to have found life much brighter at Cheyne Row, however, than she had found it at Craigenputtock. There were always plenty of visitors at her house; and the main attraction to many, if not to most of them, was the wife, not the husband. Miss Cushman describes her as a "*raconteur* unparalleled," and I have heard the present Marchioness of Ripon declare that when she was a girl, she preferred going to listen to Mrs. Carlyle's conversation than to anything else London had to offer in the shape of entertainment. It was more amusing than any theatre—more enthralling than any opera.

At first, of course, there was poverty, and the prospect of entire failure by Carlyle; there was the bitter thrift which these stern Scotch people imposed on themselves, and in addition there was the fact that Carlyle's recognition came very very slowly. But these trials of early life—especially of

early literary life—what would they have been, after all, if the Carlyles had been people of average sanity of body and mind, and above all, if Carlyle and his wife had loved each other in the full communion of a true marriage?

At all events London brought Mrs. Carlyle no happiness. Every glimpse we get of her inner life throughout the whole period shows a soul torn by rage in the hours of strength, devoured by despair in the more frequent hours of apathy and fatigue. The different epochs of Carlyle's life in London are marked by a vast difference in his outer and financial circumstances. From poverty he reaches comparative wealth: from galling obscurity to almost universal adulation; but in Mrs. Carlyle the only change which all this makes is that the nerves break down more and more under the strain of her unlifting unhappiness; that bodily infirmity follows upon constant mental unrest; and that, finally, bodily infirmity is transformed into acute, sometimes maddening, physical pain.

It is objected to this view of Mrs. Carlyle's married life that she made a great hubbub about the smallest trifles; that her housekeeping troubles, over which she raises such vociferous lamentations, are the ordinary and inevitable troubles of every housekeeper in these isles; and that the pother over these trifles must be due to a very lively imagination and to a very eloquent pen. From this the inference is made that, as it was in her housekeep-

ing, so it was in other things; that her sufferings with her husband were really nothing more than the bickerings, jars, and sorrows of almost every married life, of even harmonious unions; and that, on the whole, her married life, instead of being regarded as exceptionally miserable, must on the contrary be regarded as happy above the average.

I take a wholly opposite view, as the reader will know by this time; and I believe it a duty to press that view as strongly as I can. It were waste of breath and time to disentomb this tragedy over again, if one were to find in it no lesson and no guidance. I admit that, to me, its purely personal element has a profound, almost a morbid fascination. But it is not in its purely personal element that I find its great attraction; it is the sense—the strong and vehement sense—that we have in this personal tragedy a great object-lesson as to the proper conditions of married life, as to all the relations of men and women; and above all, as to the cruelty of the law of subjection under which women suffer.

And now, coming back to the question whether Mrs. Carlyle's life was as unhappy as she painted it, my conclusion is that it is impossible to resist the evidence in favour of this view. It is the evidence of contemporary document—and of contemporary document in its most authentic and convincing form: of letters written off in hot blood and with running pen; of the outbursts of un-

guarded conversation ; of the confidences of journals which were not intended for the public eye.

The moment I touch on the journals there is an outburst of objection. It is pointed out—and with truth—that during the evening on which Carlyle writes that he was one of the saddest, solitariest of men, he had been cheerful, gay, and courteous to everybody in a large circle of visitors ; and that, therefore, his sadness and solitariness were nothing better than a vain imagining—or a pretence—or the reaction of solitude after society.

But assuredly this is a very shallow criticism of most people—above all, of people self-absorbed and introspective as the Carlyles were. The real moments in which to test our happiness or misery are the moments when we are alone. After all, our own selves are our most constant companions. Judge of the state of a man's soul when he stands in his own chamber, alone with his own innermost thoughts, with his naked self. If then he be sad, he is a sad man ; if gay, he is a joyous one. In Carlyle's letters and journals, in the letters and journals of Carlyle's wife, we see their real selves far better than those who saw them with their society manners, courtesies, and concealments. "Her drawn, suffering face," says Froude of Mrs. Carlyle, "haunted me afterwards like a ghost;" and so it haunts me, and so it ought to haunt every man and woman of feeling, if not till the end of time, to the hour when the hideous fabric of

wrong and inequality and of mistaken duty, of which she was the type and the victim, has been finally overthrown.

XXV

To apportion the blame for Mrs. Carlyle's unhappiness, so that we may assay her or her husband's share of the responsibility to an exact nicety, were indeed impossible. She had terrible faults of character: some felt this so keenly as to positively dislike her—the gentle Browning among others, who always regarded her as a hard and unlovable woman. Froude loved her, but he says, "charming, witty, brilliantly playful as she naturally was, she had 'a hot temper,' as Carlyle had said, and a tongue when she was angry like a cat's, which would take the skin off at a touch." When she poured oil into your wounds, said Geraldine Jewsbury, the closest and most loving friend she ever had, it is oil of vitriol. And, above all things, she was without the readiness to forgive which, in man and woman—and more in woman than in man even—is the extenuation and the blotting out of the offences of quickness of temper and sharpness of tongue. His was the soft nature, says Froude over and over again: she was the flint. And it is a highly significant contrast between the two, that she cared deeply and unquestioningly for

her father alone out of all her family, while between Carlyle and every member of his family there was a touching, deep, and noble affection.

I set down all these things against Mrs. Carlyle, for it is not my desire to represent her as in the least angelic; but it does not alter my view in the least as to whose were the main guilt and the responsibility for the wreck of her life. The truth is, Carlyle was a perfectly unlovable man to live with. Whatever there was in the depth of his heart, he was in practice, habit, and demeanour selfish, tyrannical, bad-tempered to a degree which scarcely any woman could have stood—except a woman who was a merely robust fool and domestic drudge. It is not only his own remorse which avows and proves this—one might minimize that evidence because he was imaginative and self-reproachful and lonely—but every witness of his life with his wife, certain facts which cannot be contested, and above all things, the continual nervous and physical suffering through which his wife passed gradually from her joyous girlhood to her hard and suffering maturity, and then to her broken and tortured age.

There is one document in the vast storehouse of documents which I regard as specially valuable. It is a simple, unaffected, careless—almost bald letter: and just for these reasons, it puts the case with candidness, clearness, and conclusiveness. It is a letter written by Miss Gully, sister of Dr.

Gully who saw Carlyle and his wife on a visit they paid to her father's hydropathic establishment at Malvern. Here is an extract—

I think Carlyle ought never to have married *anybody*—he ought to have lived alone and had a good cook. Mrs. Carlyle was wasted on him entirely, and thrown into a sphere of life and duties for which she was quite unsuited—he, in his richest days, would never have more than one servant [this was afterwards changed], and you know how servants-of-all-work cook, and he, dyspeptic, tore his hair if the meat was tough. Their hospitality was beautiful . . . they neither of them cared a bit about food, only he could not digest common cookery! . . . I don't myself see that he had any right to indulge in the delight of a witty wife, and yet indulge in his idiosyncrasy of only having one cheap servant. . . . I must admit that he was at times selfish and not kind to his wife, when we knew them. Totally inconsiderate of her health, I remember one or two occasions on which she, suffering far more than he, was sent journeys by him in order to secure his comforts . . .

Mrs. Carlyle herself may be quoted for one or two additional touches to this picture. She described living beside Carlyle, in a letter written in 1858, as "the life of a weathercock in high wind." When they were even together in a house near Aberdeen, she compared herself to "the keeper of a mad-house." A further proof of what she felt is the fact that whenever they took vacations, it was nearly always separately. It is one of the curiosities and the contradictions of this extraordinary couple that their letters to each other were full of affection—his especially. But if we want a specimen of the cutting cruelty

there could be in the tongue of Mrs. Carlyle, it is to be found in the charge she made against her husband, that he wrote beautiful letters for the purpose of supplying good material to his biographer.

XXVI

THE most convincing proof, however, of what kind of a man Carlyle was to live with, was the effect that he had upon Mrs. Carlyle. The abundant records are as painful and, indeed, as tragic reading as I know in the literature of wedded life.

The first and worst feature is that loss of sleep, which is the most eloquent proof of broken nerves. Those who are accustomed to the horrors and terrors of sleeplessness will be able to read with a keen sympathy and understanding what Mrs. Carlyle writes of this awful retribution, which Nature demands from those who have disobeyed or have been unable to obey her laws. Mrs. Carlyle belonged to the latter class: and with that fact in your mind, read this description of her married life. It should be premised that Carlyle's bedroom was above Mrs. Carlyle's.

> My own wakings some twenty or thirty times every night of my life, for years and years back, are as nothing compared with hearing him jump out of bed overhead, once or sometimes twice during a night. . . . Now that my nerves have had a rest, and that I am more "used to it," I get to sleep again when all is quiet, but God knows how long I may be up to that. And when he has broken sleep at all, it is sad work here, I assure you.

XXVII

THE records of sleeplessness are soon followed by the mention of that other factor in the wrecking of mind and body which sleeplessness so often produces. In 1848 she speaks of "morphine dreams" as if it were already a familiar thing to her. From this year onwards morphine is constantly occurring. On settling down at home she writes, after a visit to Carlyle's mother at Scotsbrig—"After all, these wanderings had been a serious piece of work for both Mr. Carlyle and myself; for me, I have only managed it by a large consumption of morphine." Everybody knows that narcotics produce a reaction more terrible to bear than the disease of which they are so perilous a remedy; and one can understand how, with nerves shattered by pain and made susceptible by drugs, Mrs. Carlyle at times must have been as unbearable to others as to herself. I know no juxtaposition of self-revelations more pathetic and tragic than the extracts from Carlyle's Journal and his wife's correspondence in the very year when apparently morphine first began to play its tormenting part. I have just given an extract from a letter of Mrs. Carlyle. Here is one from Carlyle's Journal in a letter to her—

> How lonely am I now grown in that world; how hard . . . all the old tremulous affection lies in me, but it is as

if frozen. So mocked and scourged, and driven mad by contradictions, it had, as it were, laid down in a kind of iron sleep. . . . God help me! God soften me again!

"Took morphine last night," she writes in a letter in 1850 to her husband, "and slept sound." "Three nights ago in desperation," she writes in 1852 to her husband, "took a great dose of morphine . . . and was thankful to get some four hours of something like forgetfulness by that 'questionable' means."

In 1855, there is, under the date October 25, this entry in her Journal—"My heart is very sore to-night, but I have promised myself not to make this Journal a *miserere*, so I will take a dose of morphia and do the impossible to sleep." And finally, in order to give a clear conception of the state to which this continual want of sleep and the use of drugs had preyed on her life, I shall quote a few of the many wails that are scattered over her letters and her Journal.

The most outrageous sceptic (she writes to her husband), even I, after two nights without sleep—cannot go ahead against that fact, a rather cheering one on the whole, that, let one's earthly difficulties be what they may, death will make them all smooth sooner or later, and either one shall have a trial at existence again under new conditions, or sleep soundly through all eternity. That last used to be a horrible thought for me, but it is not so any longer. I am weary, weary to such a point of moral exhaustion, that any anchorage were welcome, even the stillest, coldest, where the wicked would cease from troubling and the weary be at rest, understanding both by the wicked and the weary—myself.

And here are a few extracts from her Journal in 1855—

November 6.—They must be comfortable people who have leisure to think about going to heaven. My most constant and pressing desire is to keep out of Bedlam.

November 7.—What a sick day this has been with me! Oh, my mother! nobody sees when I am suffering now.

December 4.—Oh, to cure any one of a terror of annihilation, just put him on my allowance of sleep, and see if he does not get to long for sleep—sleep unfathomable and everlasting, sleep as the only conceivable heaven.

Finally, there is the memorable letter to Miss Barnes, in which Mrs. Carlyle pronounces on marriage the dreadest condemnation which any woman has ever written.

And you are actually going to get married! you! already! And you expect me to congratulate you, or "perhaps not." I admire the judiciousness of that "perhaps not." Frankly, my dear, I wish you all happiness in the new life that is opening to you; and you are marrying under good auspices, since your father approves of the marriage. But congratulation on such occasions seems to me a tempting of Providence. The triumphal-procession-air which, in our manners and customs, is given to marriage at the outset—that singing of *Te Deum* before the battle has begun—has, ever since I could reflect, struck me as somewhat senseless and somewhat impious. If ever one is to pray, if ever one is to feel grave and anxious, if ever one is to shrink from vain show and vain babble—surely it is just on the occasion of two human beings binding themselves to one another, for better and for worse, till death part them; just on that occasion which it is customary to celebrate only with rejoicings, and congratulations, and trousseaux, and white ribbon! Good God!

Will you think me mad if I tell you that when I read your words, "I am going to be married," I all but screamed? Positively, it took away my breath, as if I saw you in the act

of taking a flying leap into infinite space. You had looked to me such a happy, happy little girl! your father's only daughter; and he so fond of you, as he evidently was. After you had walked out of our house together that night, and I had gone up to my own room, I sat down there in the dark and took "a good cry." You had reminded me so vividly of my own youth, when I, also an only daughter—an only child—had a father as fond of me, as proud of me. I wondered if you knew your own happiness. Well! knowing it or not, it has not been enough for you, it would seem. Naturally, youth is so insatiable of happiness, and has such sublimely insane faith in its own power to make happy and be happy.

But of your father? Who is to cheer his toilsome life, and make home bright for him? His companion through half a lifetime gone! his dear "bit of rubbish" gone too, though in a different sense. Oh, little girl! little girl! do you know the blank you will make to him?

Now, upon my honour, I seem to be writing just such a letter as a raven might write if it had been taught. Perhaps the henbane I took in despair last night has something to do with my mood to-day. Anyhow, when one can only ray out darkness, one had best clap an extinguisher on oneself. And so God bless you!

I have not thought it necessary to go into some other causes which led to this continual unhappiness, as to my mind the central and supreme cause was always Carlyle. I mention merely incidentally, therefore, and hurriedly, the intimacy between Carlyle and Lady Ashburton, which, as everybody knows, played so terribly an important part in the life of Mrs. Carlyle. For ten years Mrs. Carlyle suffered all the agonies of jealousy because of Mr. Carlyle's attention to this lady. No doubt her jealousy was irrational: jealousy

is not usually rational; but was it wholly without justification? Lady Ashburton does not come very well out of the whole business. To my mind she was guilty of acts to Carlyle and his wife which showed a great want of high courtesy in her to inflict, and a more considerable want of self-respect in Carlyle not to have resented. For instance, there is the well-known carriage incident of 1856. I quote from Froude—

> The Carlyles were going for a holiday to Scotland; Lady Ashburton was going also. She had engaged a palatial carriage, which had been made for the Queen and her suite, and she proposed to take the Carlyles down with her. The carriage consisted of a spacious saloon, to which, communicating with it, an ordinary compartment with the usual six seats was attached. Lady Ashburton occupied the saloon alone. Mrs. Carlyle, though in bad health and needing rest as much as Lady A., was placed in the compartment with her husband, the family doctor, and Lady A.'s maid, a position perfectly proper for her if she was a dependent, but in which no lady could have been placed whom Lady Ashburton regarded as her own equal in rank. It may be that Mrs. Carlyle chose to have it so herself. But Lady A. ought not to have allowed it, and Carlyle ought not to have allowed it, for it was a thing wrong in itself. One is not surprised to find that when Lady A. offered to take her home in the same way she refused to go. "If there were any companionship in the matter," she said bitterly, when Carlyle communicated Lady A.'s proposal, "it would be different, or if you go back with the Ashburtons it will be different, as then I should be going as part of your luggage without self-responsibility."

But the great justification of Mrs. Carlyle's resentment is the fact that Carlyle gave all that was best and most engaging of himself to another

woman and at another woman's house, while at home he remained the silent, surly, unapproachable bear of his early days. This is too common a contrast in the conduct of men to women, and to their wives especially—the women whom economic as well as social laws usually place, alone of all women in the world, at the mercy of their caprices and their moods. But the vice does not become the less a vice because of its frequency. Many good women have been shocked at the entry in Mrs. Carlyle's Journal in which she draws the contrast between the early promise of her life as a spoilt and only child, and her position at the moment recorded, in mending Mr. Carlyle's trousers while he is elsewhere. It is doubless true that a real wife would find any such lowly occupation a joy and satisfaction, but it should be a condition that the husband loved and was loved; that condition being absent in the case of Mr. Carlyle. It was only natural that a woman in Mrs. Carlyle's position should draw a bitter contrast between herself, sitting lonely and occupied at home in menial work, and her lord and master lionized in the halls of the great.

XXVIII

I APPROACH with some relief the closing scenes of the painful tragedy. On an evening in 1863 there occurred the accident of which the world

has heard so much. Mrs. Carlyle had gone to call at a cousin's house in Martin's Lane, and as she was rushing to catch an omnibus she was thrown by a cab on the kerbstone. Her right arm by this time had become quite useless through continued neuralgia, and she was unable to break the fall; with the result that she fell heavily, the sinews of one of her thighs were strained and lacerated, and she suffered dreadful pain. I continue the story in the language of Mr. Henry Larkin, who for many years acted as secretary and assistant to Carlyle. Anybody can read between the lines and see its tragic significance.

I recollect that evening perfectly, and also the scene of helpless misery which in a few words he so distinctly photographs. But the eye only sees what it brings the means of seeing; and he little thought it was his own presence which had suddenly produced the collapse which struck him so painfully. To make the picture which thus fixed itself on his memory intelligible, it will be necessary to explain, or, perhaps, as he would say, to "reiterate," that few men have been constitutionally less able to cope with unexpected difficulties than he was. In any case of confusion or embarrassment, it was sheer misery to have him even standing by and looking on; his own irritable impatience was at once so contagious and so depressing. It was a constant struggle on Mrs. Carlyle's part either to keep him out of the way, or to take the opportunity of his being away from home to effect any changes which might have become necessary; and this as much for his own sake as for hers.

On the evening in question I was sitting quietly at home when I heard a gentle rap at the door, and was informed that Mrs. Carlyle's servant wished to speak to me. She told me that Mrs. Carlyle had just been brought home in a cab, seriously hurt by a fall, and begged I would come in at

once. I went instantly, and found her on a chair in the back room of the ground floor, evidently in great pain. As soon as she saw me, she said, "Oh, Mr. Larkin, do get me up into my own room before Mr. Carlyle knows anything about it. He'll drive me mad if he comes in now!" We at once consulted as to how we could best carry her up; when, just as we were about to do it, he entered, as he tells us, looking terribly shocked and even angry. I saw he was annoyed at my being there instead of him; so I said as little as possible, helped him to carry her up-stairs, and then left.

It was while she was suffering from this dreadful illness that one of the most frightful incidents in her whole marriage life occurred. I give Froude's account of it.

Carlyle was not allowed to know how seriously she had been injured. The doctor and she both agreed to conceal it from him, and during those first days a small incident happened, which she herself described to me, showing the distracting want of perception which sometimes characterized him—a want of perception, not a want of feeling, for no one could have felt more tenderly. The nerves and muscles were completely disabled on the side on which she had fallen, and one effect was that the under jaw had dropped, and that she could not close it. Carlyle always disliked an open mouth; he thought it a sign of foolishness. One morning, when the pain was at its worst, he came into her room, and stood looking at her, leaning on the mantel-piece. "Jane," he said presently, "ye had better shut your mouth." She tried to tell him that she could not. "Jane," he began again, "ye'll find yourself in a more compact and pious frame of mind if ye shut your mouth." In old-fashioned and, in him, perfectly sincere phraseology he told her that she ought to be thankful that the accident was no worse. Mrs. Carlyle hated cant as heartily as he, and to her, in her sore state of mind and body, such words had a flavour of cant in them. True herself as steel, she would not bear it. "Thankful!" she said to him; "thankful for what? For having been thrown

down in the street when I had gone on an errand of charity? for being disabled, crushed, made to suffer in this way? I am not thankful, and I will not say that I am." He left her, saying he was sorry to see her so rebellious. We can hardly wonder after this that he had to report sadly to his brother—"She speaks little to me, and does not accept me as a sick nurse, which, truly, I had never any talent to be."

Of course he did not know at first her real condition. She had such indomitable courage that she persuaded him that she was actually better off since she had become helpless than "when she had been struggling to go out daily and returned done up, with her joints like to fall in pieces." For a month she could not move—at the end of it she was able to struggle to her feet and crawl occasionally into the adjoining room. Carlyle was blind. Seven weeks after the accident he could write—"She actually sleeps better, eats better, and is cheerfuller than formerly. For perhaps three weeks past she has been hitching about with a stick. She can walk too, but slowly, without a stick. In short, she is doing well enough—as indeed am I, and have need to be."

It almost makes one blush for one's manhood to read such a scene, and it made Carlyle blush and weep for ever afterwards. In the very next page of his *Reminiscences*, which tells the story of her suffering in this illness, there is this touching outburst—

Blind and deaf that we are! Oh, think if thou yet love any body living, wait not till death sweeps down the paltry little dust-clouds and idle dissonances of the moment, and all be at last so mournfully clear and beautiful, when it is too late!

One of the most touching scenes in the history of this strange life is that of the November evening in 1863 when Froude and his wife paid a visit to Carlyle and his wife. Carlyle at this moment was

in the final agonies of getting rid of that terrible book on Frederick which had been a torment to himself and his wife for thirteen long years. At the moment he began to make the painful and almost terrible discovery that the book had become a very nightmare and a horror, and instead of finishing it "like a rocket stick" he must write a new volume. "For his sake," writes Froude, "and knowing how the truth, if he was aware of it, would agitate him, with splendid heroism she had forced herself prematurely to her feet again, the mental resolution conquering the weakness of the body."

I go to Carlyle's own account again, for they are amongst the most touching pages in the *Letters and Memorials.*

Not many evenings after the last of these two letters, I was sitting solitary over my dreary Prussian books, as usual, in the drawing-room, perhaps about ten p.m., the room perhaps (without my knowledge) made trimmer than usual, when suddenly, without warning given, the double door from her bedroom went wide open, and my little darling, all radiant in graceful evening dress, followed by a maid with new lights, came gliding in to me, gently stooping, leaning on a fine Malacca cane, saying *silently* but so eloquently, "Here am I come back to you, dear!" It was among the bright moments of my life—the picture of it is still vivid with me, and will always be. Till now I had not seen her in the drawing-room, had only heard of those tentative pilgrimings thither with her maid for support. But now I considered the victory as good as won, and everything fallen into its old course again or a better. Blind that we were! This was but a gleam of sunlight, and ended swiftly in a far blacker storm of miseries than ever before.

And here is another pathetic extract—

"Neuralgia!" the doctors then all said, by which they mean they know not in the least what; in this case, such a deluge of intolerable pain, indescribable, unaidable pain, as I had never seen or dreamt of, and which drowned six or eight months of my poor darling's life as in the blackness of very death; her recovery at last, and the manner of it, an unexpected miracle to me. There seemed to be pain in every muscle, misery in every nerve, no sleep by night or day, no rest from struggle and desperate suffering. Nobody ever known to me could more nobly and silently endure pain; but here for the first time I saw her vanquished, driven hopeless, as it were looking into a wild chaotic universe of boundless woe—on the horizon only death or worse. Oh! I have seen such expressions in those dear and beautiful eyes as exceeded all tragedy!—one night in particular, when she rushed desperately out to me, without speech; got laid and wrapped by me on the sofa, and gazed silently on all the old familiar objects and me.

At last it was seen that her final chance of recovery was to leave London, and I may add to leave Carlyle also; for doubtless much of her misery was due to her feeling that she was adding to his discomfort and difficulty in ending his book; possibly, too, he was not slow on this occasion, as well as on others, to express himself rather unfeelingly at the slowness of her recovery. In a letter of hers written soon after the accident I find this passage, which I have not seen noticed by any of her biographers, but it is one which throws as lurid a light as any I have yet quoted on what she felt about Carlyle, and how Carlyle appeared to her. "My great object," she says, "after getting

what waiting on I absolutely needed, has been that the usual quiet routine of the house should not be disturbed around Mr. Carlyle. Of this I am sure, that he has been victimized enough in having to answer occasional letters of inquiry about me."

On March 2, 1864, Mrs. Carlyle was removed to St. Leonards, and we have an account of that strange flitting both from Mr. Carlyle and Mr. Larkin.

"I don't think you will find me very very heavy," she said to Mr. Larkin, and indeed he did not, for, says he, "I carried her down as easily as if she had been a child of twelve years old." She had to take her departure in an invalid carriage. "Hideous to look upon," says Carlyle, "black, low, base-looking, and you entered by a window as if it were a hearse." "Worst of all," as Mr. Larkin puts it, "the live corpse was to be slid in feet foremost."

> I saw at a glance (he says) the whole horror of the thing as it would strike her . . . she was already being carried from the house. I shall never forget the agony of the stifled shriek which she could not suppress as they lifted and pushed her in.

She returned to Cheyne Row in October 1864, at last free from pain, "no more," as Carlyle puts it, "flying from the tormentor, panting like a hunted doe, with all the hounds in full chase." "She reappeared," writes Froude, "in her old circle, weak, shattered, her body worn to a shadow, but with a spirit as bright as ever — brighter

perhaps." "A faint, quiet, timid smile was on her face," says Carlyle, "as though afraid to believe fully she was brought back to me, my own again as before."

XXIX

WE approach the closing epoch. Carlyle himself thus describes it—

> Here ended the most tragic part of our tragedy. Act the fifth, though there lay Death in it, was nothing like so unhappy. The last epoch of my darling's life is to be defined as almost happy in comparison! It was still loaded with infirmities, bodily weakness, sleeplessness, continual, or almost continual, pain and weary misery, so far as the body was concerned; but her noble spirit seemed as if it now had its wings free. . . . The battle was over, and we were sore wounded; but the battle was over and well!

What added sunshine to this brief period of rest, freedom from pain, and mental calm, was that at last Carlyle had begun to be a real friend to his wife, that at last the demon of jealousy had been exorcised from her heart, and she had discovered that in his own strange fashion he deeply and tenderly loved her. "I can't tell you," she writes to a friend, "how good Mr. Carlyle is; he is as busy as ever, but he studies my comfort and peace as he never did before."

It was in the year 1864 that he also gratified her by giving her the use of a brougham. Mr. Larkin declares that he never saw Mrs. Carlyle so pleased

with anything as with this gift from her husband. "What gives me the most joy," she said to Mr. Larkin, "is that *he did it entirely himself*. I never suggested, on the contrary I had always discouraged the idea."

And finally, when on January 9, 1865, Carlyle posted the "last leaf" of his *Frederick* MS., there was an end of that terrible work, which had been almost fatal to both the husband and wife; which, in her case, was so far fatal as to be probably the proximate cause of her final break-down. "On her face," writes Carlyle, "there was a silent, faint and pathetic smile"—as well there might have been.

There were through 1865 some sharp attacks of the old neuralgic tortures, with days of deep depression and nights without sleep; and there were ominous signs of growing weakness, that might have prepared her husband for the end. Now and then there are complaints of Carlyle's impatience of spirit—an impatience that in all his anxiety to repress, and with all the too palpable misery it caused to her, he was not able always to control. For instance, owing to the lameness of their horse, Mrs. Carlyle had to substitute drives in omnibuses for those in the brougham. The sight of Carlyle running after the omnibuses to get them to stop for her, proved too much for her. "I was like," she writes, "to cry with nervousness to find myself left alone in an open street, and couldn't

run after him as he kept calling to me to do—couldn't run at all." A slight picture—but oh! how eloquent, touching, and maddening! For this woman, who was asked impatiently and perchance angrily to run after an omnibus, is dying of heart disease, and already has entered into the valley of the shadow!

XXX

EVERYBODY knows of the blaze of light in which this tragedy ended.

In November 1865, Carlyle was elected Lord Rector of the Edinburgh University, and in the following March he set out to deliver his address.

There are some journeys which have an immortality of interest—sometimes they belong to the realm of fiction, sometimes to that of fact. Hetty Sorrel's journey in hope, and then in despair; the journey of Tess of the D'Urbervilles to the house of her lost husband—these are the episodes in the lives of the children of the novelist's brain which will be read with fresh interest centuries after we have passed away. Possibly it is not an exaggeration to say that the same perennial interest will be taken in the journey of Carlyle to deliver his rectorial address at Edinburgh; for with that journey are inseparably connected two events which will always be regarded as fraught with all the pathos of human destinies. The first

was the final attainment of dignity, popularity, universal triumph, by a genius at length liberated from a youth and long manhood of drudgery, poverty, obscurity, and all the hell of the imaginative dyspeptic's self-torture; and the second event is the final snapping of the chain which bound together a most remarkable man and a most remarkable woman in as painful, tragic, thrilling a marriage as human history records.

It is from Professor Tyndall I borrow the account of the journey. After many debates with Mrs. Carlyle, it was decided that Tyndall should be Carlyle's companion and guardian during the eventful trip. Every word that Professor Tyndall has written on this journey is delightful and instructive reading. There is a series of pictures of Carlyle, in all his vast variety of moods, which gives a very complete and a very lucid idea of his strange, fitful, storm-tossed nature. And knowing, as we do, what awaited poor Carlyle after all the blaze and tumult of trumpets, there is not an episode in the whole journey which has not its pathos and its interest. Here is how Carlyle and his companion took their departure—

On the morning of March 29, 1866, I drove to Cheyne Row, and found him punctually ready at the appointed hour. Order was Carlyle's first law, and punctuality was one of the chief factors of order. He was therefore punctual. On a table in a small back parlour below stairs stood a siphon, protected by wickerwork. Carlyle was conservative in habit, and in his old age he held on to the brown brandy which was

in vogue in his younger days. Into a tumbler Mrs. Carlyle poured a moderate quantity of this brandy, and filled it up with the foaming water from the siphon. He drank it off, and they kissed each other—for the last time. At the door she suddenly said to me, "For God's sake send me one line by telegraph when all is over." This said and the promise given, we drove away.

It had been arranged that Carlyle should make a short stay at Fryston, the seat in Yorkshire of his old friend, Lord Houghton. The welcome was warm to enthusiasm; but Fryston "was clasped as in a ring" by railroads, "and their whistles were energetically active all night."

In the morning I found Carlyle in his bedroom, wild with his sufferings. He had not slept a wink. It ought to be noted that the day previous he had dined two or three hours later than was his wont, and had engaged in a vigorous discussion after dinner. Looking at me despairingly he said—"I can stay no longer at Fryston, another such night would kill me." "You shall do exactly as you please," was my reply. "I will explain matters to Lord Houghton, and he, I am persuaded, will comply with all your wishes." I spoke to Lord Houghton, who, though sorely disappointed, agreed that it was best to allow his guest complete freedom of action. It was accordingly arranged that we should push on to Edinburgh. Carlyle's breakfast was prepared; he partially filled a bowl with strong tea, added milk and an egg beaten up. Rendered thus nutritive, the tea seemed to soothe and strengthen him. As he breakfasted, our plans were discussed. Once, after a pause, he exclaimed—"How ungrateful it is on my part, after so much kindness, to quit Fryston in this fashion!" Taking prompt advantage of this moment of relenting, I said—"Do not quit it, but stay. We will take a pair of horses and gallop over the country for five or six hours. When you return you shall have a dinner like what you are accustomed to at home, and I will take care that there shall be no discussion afterwards." He

laughed, which was a good sign. I stood to my guns, and he at length yielded. Lord Houghton joyfully ratified the programme, and the two horses were immediately got ready.

The animal bestrode by Carlyle (continues Professor Tyndall) was a large bony grey, with a terribly hard mouth. He seemed disposed to bolt, and obviously required a strong wrist to rein him in. Carlyle was no longer young; *paralysis agitans* had enfeebled his right hand—for some time my anxiety was great. But after sundry imprecations and strenuous backward pulls, the horse was at length clearly mastered by its rider, and we fleetly sped along—through lanes, over fields, along high-roads, past turnpike gates where I paid the toll. This continued for at least five hours, at the end of which we returned, and handed the bespattered horses over to the groom. The roads and lanes had been abominable, mud to the fetlocks, not to speak of the slimy fields . . .

Carlyle went to his room, donned his slippers and his respectable grey dressing-gown. Carrying with him one of the long "churchwardens" which he always obtained from Glasgow, he stuffed it full of tobacco. Choosing a position on the carpet by the hall fire which enabled him to send the products of combustion up the chimney, to the obvious astonishment of the passing servants, he began to smoke. Having with me at the time a flask of choice pale brandy, of this, mixed with soda-water, I gave him a stiff tumbler. The ride had healthily tired him, and he looked the picture of content. At six o'clock his simple dinner was set before him, and he was warned against discussion. It was the traditional warning of the war-horse to be quiet when he hears the bugle sound. In the evening discussion began with one of the guests, and I could see that Carlyle was ready to dash into it as impetuously as he done the night before. I laid my hand upon his arm and said sternly—"We must have no more of this." He arched his brows good-humouredly, burst into laughter, and ended the discussion. I accompanied him to his bedroom, every chink and fissure of which had been closed to stop out both light and sound. "I have no hope of sleep," he said, "and I will come to your room at seven in the morning." My reply was—"I think

you *will* sleep, and if so I will come to your room instead of your coming to mine." My hopes were mainly founded on the vigorous exercise he had taken; but the next day being Good Friday I also hoped for a mitigation of the whistle nuisance.

At seven o'clock, accordingly, I stood at his door. There was no sound. Returning at eight, I found the same dead silence. At nine, hearing a rustle, I opened his door and found him dressing; the change from the previous morning was astonishing. Never before or afterwards did I see Carlyle's countenance glow with such happiness. It was seraphic. I have often thought of it since. How in the case of a man possessing a range of life wide enough to embrace the demoniac and the godlike, a few hours' sound sleep can lift him from the hell of the one into the serene heaven of the other. The question of sleep or sleeplessness hides many a tragedy. He looked at me with boundless blessedness in his eyes and voice—"My dear friend, I am a totally new man; I have slept nine hours without once awaking." That night's rest proved the prelude and guarantee of his subsequent triumph at Edinburgh.

At last Carlyle and Professor Tyndall arrived at Edinburgh; but here their troubles were not over. Sir David Brewster was in a dreadful state of alarm. "Why," he said to Tyndall, "Carlyle has not written a word of his address, and no Rector of this University ever appeared before his audience without this needful preparation." But Tyndall did not have any fears on this ground, "being well aware of Carlyle's marvellous power of utterance when he had fair play." What he did fear was that Carlyle might be disabled by dyspepsia and insomnia. At last the great moment came.

The degrees conferred, a fine, tall young fellow rose and proclaimed with ringing voice from the platform the honour

that had been conferred on the foremost of living Scotchmen. The cheers were loud and long. Carlyle stood up, threw off his robe, like an ancient David declining the unproved armour of Saul, and in his carefully-brushed, brown morning-coat came forward to the table. With nervous fingers he grasped the leaf, and stooping over it, looked earnestly down upon the audience. "They tell me," he said, "that I ought to have written this address, and out of deference to the counsel, I tried to do so, once, twice, thrice. But what I wrote was only fit for the fire, and to the fire it was compendiously committed. You must therefore listen to and accept what I say to you as coming straight from the heart." He began, and the world already knows what he said. I attended more to the aspect of the audience than to the speech of the orator, which contained nothing new to me. I could, however, mark its influence on the palpitating crowd below. They were stirred as if by subterranean fire. For an hour and a half he held them spellbound, and when he ended, the emotion previously pent up burst forth in a roar of acclamation. With a joyful heart and clear conscience I could redeem my promise to Mrs. Carlyle. From the nearest telegraph-office I sent her a despatch of three words—"A perfect triumph," and returned towards the hall. Noticing a commotion in the street, I came up with the crowd. It was no street brawl, it was not the settlement of a quarrel, but a consensus of acclamation, cheers, and "bravos," and a general shying of caps into the air! Looking ahead, I saw two venerable old men walking slowly arm-in-arm in advance of the crowd. They were Carlyle and Erskine. The Rector's audience had turned out to do honour to their hero. Nothing in the whole ceremony affected Carlyle so deeply as this display of fervour in the open air.

Mrs. Carlyle, who had been awaiting the news with agonized suspense, received the telegram at five minutes past six in the evening. She describes what happened in one of the last letters she ever wrote to Carlyle.

Mrs. Warren and Maggie were helping to dress me for Forster's birthday, when the telegraph-boy gave his double-knock. "There it is!" I said. "I am afraid, cousin, it is only the postman," said Maggie. Jessie rushed up with the telegram. I tore it open and read—"From John Tyndall" (Oh, God bless John Tyndall in this world and the next!)—"To Mrs. Carlyle. A perfect triumph!" I read it to myself, and then read it aloud to the gaping chorus. And chorus all began to dance and clap their hands. "Eh, Mrs. Carlyle! Eh, hear to that!" cried Jessie. "I told you, ma'am," cried Mrs. Warren, "I told you how it would be." "I'm so glad, cousin! you'll be all right now, cousin," twittered Maggie, executing a sort of leap-frog round me. And they went on clapping their hands, till there arose among them a sudden cry for brandy! "Get her some brandy!" "Do, ma'am, swallow this spoonful of brandy; just a spoonful!" For, you see, the sudden solution of the nervous tension with which I had been holding in my anxieties for days—nay, weeks past—threw me into as pretty a little fit of hysterics as you ever saw.

I went to Forster's nevertheless, with my telegram in my hand, and "John Tyndall" in the core of my heart! And it was pleasant to see with what hearty good-will all there—Dickens and Wilkie Collins as well as Fuz—received the news; and we drank your health with great glee.

XXXI

IT was thought advisable that Carlyle should have some rest in Scotland before returning to Cheyne Row. His wife and he corresponded regularly after their invariable fashion, amid all their sad misunderstandings and quarrels. I quote from Froude.

Anxiety about the speech and its concomitants had, as Mrs. Carlyle expressed it, "tattered her to fiddle-strings." The sudden relief, when it was over, was scarcely less trying.

She had visitors to see, who came with their congratulations. She had endless letters to receive answer. To escape from part of this she had gone to Windsor, to spend two days with her friend Mrs. Oliphant, and had greatly enjoyed her visit. On coming back she had dined with Lady William Russell, in Audley Square, and had there a smart passage of words with Mr. Hayward on the Jamaica disturbances, the news of which, and of Governor Eyre's action, had just arrived. The chief subject of conversation everywhere was her husband's address, and of this there was nothing said but good. Tyndall came back. She saw him, heard all particulars from him, and was made perfectly happy about it. Carlyle himself would be home in a day or two. For Saturday the 21st, purposely that it might be got over before his arrival, she had invited a small party to tea.

Principal Tulloch and his wife were in London; they wished to meet me or else I to meet them, I forget which it was. I hope the desire was mutual. I, the Tullochs, Mr. and Mrs. Spottiswoode, and Mrs. Oliphant were to be Mrs. Carlyle's guests in Cheyne Row that evening. Geraldine Jewsbury, who was then living in Markham Square, was to assist in entertaining us. That morning Mrs. Carlyle wrote her daily letter to Carlyle, and took it herself to the post.

In the afternoon she went out in her brougham for the usual drive round Hyde Park, taking her little dog with her. Nero lay under a stone in the garden at Cheyne Row, but she loved all kinds of animals, dogs especially, and had found another to succeed him. Near Victoria Gate she had put the dog out to run. A passing carriage went over its foot, and, more frightened than hurt, it lay on the road on its back crying. She sprang out, caught the dog in her arms, took it with her into the brougham, and was never more seen alive. The coachman went twice round the drive, by Marble Arch down to Stanhope Gate, along the Serpentine, and round again. Coming a second time near the Hercules statue and surprised to receive no directions, he turned round, saw indistinctly something was wrong, and asked a gentleman near to look into the carriage. The gentleman told him briefly to take the lady to St. George's

Hospital, which was not two hundred yards distant. She was sitting with her hands folded on her lap, dead.

Froude had remained at home that day; in the evening he was to have met Mrs. Carlyle, as has been seen. A servant came from the housekeeper at Cheyne Row with the news that an accident had happened to Mrs. Carlyle, and asking him to go at once to St. George's Hospital.

Instinct told me what it must be. I went on the way to Geraldine; she was getting ready for the party, and supposed I had called to take her there. I told her the message I had received. She flung a cloak about her, and we drove to the hospital together.

There on a bed in a small room lay Mrs. Carlyle, beautifully dressed, dressed, as she always was, in perfect taste. Nothing had been touched. Her bonnet had not been taken off. It was as if she had sat upon the bed after leaving the brougham, and had fallen back upon it asleep. But there was an expression on her face which was not sleep, and which, long as I had known her, resembled nothing which I had ever seen there before. The forehead, which had been contracted in life by continual pain, had spread out to its natural breadth, and I saw for the first time how magnificent it was! The brilliant mockery, the sad softness with which the mockery alternated, both were alike gone. The features lay composed in a stern majestic calm. I have seen many faces beautiful in death, but none so grand as hers.

Carlyle heard of the news by telegram, and sixteen hours after this fatal announcement, he received a letter—the letter from her already mentioned, cheery and merry. The grief and despair of his loneliness ever after are well known. If he had wronged her—as he had—she was avenged.

On the Monday following the death, Carlyle returned with his brother John to London. "Never," says Carlyle, "for one thousand years should I forget that arrival here of ours, my first unwelcomed by her. She lay in her coffin, lovely in death."

Tyndall was soon with him.

I drove forthwith to Chelsea. The door was opened by Carlyle's old servant, Mrs. Warren, who informed me that her master was in the garden. I joined him there, and we immediately went up-stairs together. It would be idle, perhaps sacrilegious, on my part to attempt any repetition of his language. In words, the flow of which might be compared to a molten torrent, he referred to the early days of his wife and himself, to their struggles against poverty and obstruction; to her valiant encouragement in hours of depression; to their life on the moors, in Edinburgh, and in London; how lovingly and loyally she had made of herself a soft cushion to protect him from the rude collisions of the world. The late Mr. Venables, whose judgment on such a point may be trusted, often spoke to me of Carlyle's extraordinary power of conversation. In his noon of life it was without a parallel. And now, with the flood-gates of grief fully opened, that power rose to a height which it had probably never attained before. Three or four times during the narrative he utterly broke down. I could see the approach of the crisis, and prepared for it. After thus giving way, a few sympathetic words would cause him to rapidly pull himself together, and resume the flow of his discourse. I subsequently tried to write down what he said, but I will not try to reproduce it here. While he thus spoke to me, all that remained of his wife lay silent in an adjoining room.

XXXII

SHE was buried in Haddington, by the side of that father whom she had so deeply loved. Carlyle depicts his feelings with singular beauty—

I looked out (he says) upon the spring fields, the everlasting skies in silence . . . I went out to walk in the smooth, silent streets . . . I looked up at the windows of the old room, where I had first seen her, after sunset, six-and-forty years ago . . . I retired to my room; slept none all night . . . but lay silent in the great silence.

Thursday, April 26.—Wandered out into the churchyard . . . At one p.m. came the funeral . . . Silent, small, only twelve old friends and two volunteers besides us there. Very beautiful and noble to me, and I laid her in the grave of her father, according to covenant of forty years back—and all was ended. In the nave of the old abbey kirk, long a ruin, now being saved from further decay, with the skies looking down on her, there sleeps my little Jeannie, and the light of her face will never shine on me more.

In Mrs. Ireland's biography there is a description by John Swinton, a well-known American writer, of Carlyle at his wife's grave, which, though somewhat highly coloured, after the manner of transatlantic narration, is yet too graphic and touching to be omitted.

"And Mr. Carlyle," said the sexton, "comes from London now and then to see this grave. He is a gaunt, shaggy, weird kind of old man, looking very old the last time he was here." "He is eighty-six now," said I. "Aye," he repeated, "eighty-six, and comes here to this grave all the way from London." And I told him that Carlyle was a great man, the greatest man of the age in books, and that his name was known

all over the world; but the sexton thought there were other great men lying near at hand, though I told him their fame did not reach beyond the graveyard, and brought him back to talk of Carlyle. "Mr. Carlyle himself," said the grave-digger softly, "is to be brought here to be buried with his wife. Aye, he comes here lonesome and alone," continued the grave-digger, "when he visits his wife's grave. His niece keeps him company to the gate, but he leaves her there, and she stays there for him. The last time he was here I got a sight of him, and he was bowed down under his white hairs, and he took his way up by that ruined wall of the old cathedral, and round there and in here by the gateway, and he tottered up here to this spot." Softly spake the grave-digger, and paused. Softer still, in the broad dialect of the Lothians, he proceeded—"And he stood here awhile in the grass, and then he kneeled down and stayed on his knees at the grave; then he bent over, and I saw him kiss the ground—aye, he kissed it again and again, and he kept kneeling, and it was a long time before he rose and tottered out of the cathedral and wandered through the graveyard to the gate, where his niece was waiting for him."

And on this scene in the tragedy let the curtain fall.

THE END

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